Motivating Students

Educators share ideas for getting your class in gear. Page 40

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Parents in the Picture

Building partnerships that last beyond "Back to School Night"

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Behind Prison Walls

Reporter John Rosales takes you inside an Ohio correctional facility classroom. **www.nea.org/ref?prisonclass**

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POLL

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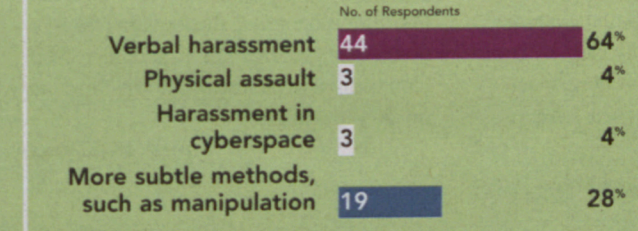

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NOW YOU'RE TALKING

Standardized Curriculum

I have serious concerns about the issue of being forced to engage in "curriculum mapping" in my high school district. Once again, an administrator has attended a forum, conference, or convention, and has grasped onto what seems to be the latest fad in education: curriculum mapping.

Teacher Dress Codes

The level of professional dress varies with the teaching position. A phys ed teacher can wear decent-looking sweats and be dressed appropriately, and a shop teacher can wear decent-looking jeans. I, as a high school English teacher, cannot wear either....

—FROM THE NEA.ORG DISCUSSION BOARDS

WHAT HAVE YOU HEARD? *Speak out on our discussion forums to debate education issues or share your stories and strategies at* www.nea.org/forums.

The Eye of the Storm

In "The Eye of the Storm" (May), you captured the heartbeat of educators in St. Bernard Parish. I, too, am a teacher at Andrew Jackson Elementary who travels two hours from Baton Rouge to Chalmette to teach in one of our nation's premier educational systems. The employees are a joy to work with, and the students truly make you feel needed.

Hopefully, as my daughter, who is also a young sixth-grade teacher there, restores our home in Chalmette, we can move out of the teacher campers into a real bed in a real bedroom. Each day our hope grows, as our character strengthens.

MILLIE SOROE, *St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana*

Thank you for this article ("The Eye of the Storm," May). I have recently retired after 30 years in the classroom. I kept thinking of the problems we all have running a classroom. Then add on the difficult circumstances faced by these teachers, and I can't imagine how they do it! I felt proud of my profession, and wished that the article could appear in a journal read by others not in the field. Too many people think the job is easy, and I wish they could see the love and dedication these teachers have for the children and their jobs.

JOYCE HECHT
Chicago, Illinois

In 1986, another teacher and I went to Houston to participate in the Teacher Aerospace Program for overseas educators. [It was] the summer after the *Challenger* disaster. Barbara Morgan was there, having been the next in line to go after Christa McAuliffe. I remember her expressing both her sorrow at the misfortune of the *Challenger* crew as well as her disappointment that she wouldn't be going up as soon as she would have liked. I am thrilled to hear that she will finally go up, 20 years later.

JUDITH HALSEMA
Manassas, Virginia

REACH FOR THE STARS

Barbara Morgan's story ("She's Gonna Need a Sub," May) really inspired me to look forward to my dream of becoming a teacher. Since I was 5 years old, I always wanted to become either a teacher or an astronaut. I never knew that maybe one day I would be able to do both. Her story, the inspirations that she received from Christa McAuliffe, and her persistence are showing all of us that teaching is not one single profession, but rather an inspiration to make dreams come true.

ELNAZ ABDOLI DARMANY
West Covina, California

ONE FOR THE HISTORY BOOKS

I read the article about the math teacher who raps ("People," May). I have to say I am impressed. Nine years ago my history students challenged me to do my American Revolution lecture in a rap format, so I created the Revolution Rap and Civil War rap. Both have been recorded on tape and in video by my students. The principal had me do it at the staff meeting and it went over well. I continue to update it according to students who let me know what the latest rap words are.

GREGG WHITE
Modesto, California

A BALANCED PERSPECTIVE

I'm glad you are taking a positive look at what the military can offer some of our students ("Uncle Sam Wants...You?" April). I hope schools that allow the military to recruit on their campuses will remember to present opposing views as well so our students receive a balanced perspective. Often our high school students are desensitized to human suffering and are not truly aware that war hurts.

MARSHA CHEVALIER
Santa Rosa, California

CORRECTION: An April article on military recruiting incorrectly identified the Tucson district where teacher Rolande Baker works, which is the Sunnyside School District. Also, federal law does not require schools to grant access to military recruiters at least twice a year, as the article stated. There is no minimum requirement.

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THE PARENT TRAP

Always willing to pitch in, Kim Wilson's what many educators call a "partner parent." For her persistence in advocating for her child, Shani Weber laughingly calls herself an "Apache helicopter parent." You probably know the types. But do you know the Loreleis of the world, who don't feel welcome in school? Or the Jeaneth Lazimas, for whom language and culture are formidable barriers to helping their children succeed? Educators are finding new ways to involve these oft-absent parents as education partners, not just volunteers. You'll find out how on page 26. And as you read through the magazine, you'll notice changes, both big and small, that we hope make *NEA Today* even more engaging. Let us know what you think. As I sign off as editor of *NEA Today* and move on to new adventures, thank you for allowing me and the rest of the magazine's exceptional staff to share in yours. Please keep your stories and suggestions coming to neatoday@nea.org, and here's hoping this school year is your best yet.

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITY. We believe public education is the gateway to opportunity. All students have the human and civil right to a quality public education that develops their potential, independence, and character.

A JUST SOCIETY. We believe public education is vital to building respect for the worth, dignity, and equality of every individual in our diverse society.

DEMOCRACY. We believe public education is the cornerstone of our republic. Public education provides individuals with the skills to be involved, informed, and engaged in our representative democracy.

PROFESSIONALISM. We believe that the expertise and judgment of education professionals are critical to student success. We maintain the highest professional standards, and we expect the status, compensation, and respect due all professionals.

PARTNERSHIP. We believe partnerships with parents, families, communities, and other stakeholders are essential to quality public education and student success.

COLLECTIVE ACTION. We believe individuals are strengthened when they work together for the common good. As education professionals, we improve both our professional status and the quality of public education when we unite and advocate collectively.

GETTING PARENTS ON BOARD

A timely refresher on parent involvement

In Kimberly Oliver's kindergarten class, there are just 15 students, but they represent nearly every continent on the globe. Her school, Broad Acres Elementary in Silver Spring, Maryland, is largely low-income, with 90 percent of students receiving free or reduced-price meals. Nearly 80 percent of the children do not speak English at home.

Helping her students' parents, many of them immigrants, stay involved and engaged in their children's education presented a challenge for Oliver, the 2006 National Teacher of the Year. She overcame the hurdle by sponsoring "Books and Supper Night," an event held four times a year that allows families to visit the school and check out books from the library. They read together, receive free books to continue family reading time at home, and enjoy a communal dinner where they interact with and get to know their neighbors.

With a little creativity, Oliver was able to take the burden off of parents struggling with language barriers or illiteracy. Yet hard-to-reach parents do not fall into any race or class—it is simply a matter of circumstances. It may be the professional parents who work long hours or the family without a phone. It may be a single mom unable to find childcare so she can visit the school, or parents too embarrassed by their speech, dress, or English skills to walk through the school doors.

PHOTO: DAVID R. BARNES/NEA

> "The message we must send to parents is that we can't replace you, we can't do it for you, but together, we can make a huge difference for your child."
>
> —Reg Weaver

As educators, we often struggle when it comes to involving some parents in their child's education. There is no official manual on engaging parents and community members, but there are effective strategies that can serve as a prescription for success in getting parents, especially harried parents with little time and few resources, to participate in school.

Ideas include meeting parents on their turf through home visits; parent meetings in neighborhood centers, restaurants, and other locations that are close and comfortable for community members; and family resource centers in schools with flexible hours so parents can attend informal gatherings or workshops during the day, at night, or on weekends.

Wishing for more parent involvement won't make it happen. Sometimes we need to go the extra mile to connect with parents so they can see that we, like them, are dedicated to their children succeeding. We can also help improve public education because parents who get involved in their child's school are more likely to become advocates for schools in their neighborhoods and communities.

As partners, parents and educators have forced politicians to address the class size issue. And it has been parents and educators who have fought for up-to-date textbooks and materials, and fought against harmful policies that divert scarce resources from public schools.

Providing every child, regardless of race, income, or ethnicity, with a quality education is a basic right that our public schools must deliver. But we can't do this job alone. By the age of 18, children have typically spent only 13 percent of their waking lives at school. Our best efforts to close the achievement gaps and raise student achievement are going nowhere unless we have major help from outside the school.

Team NEA, as we start a new school year, the message we must send to parents is that we can't replace you, we can't do it for you, but together, we can make a huge difference for your child. Have a wonderful year, and thank you for working hard to create great public schools for every student!

Reg Weaver

NEA PRESIDENT REG WEAVER

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HYUNDAI

Who was your favorite teacher when you were in school?

My third-grade teacher, Miss McFarland, made such a difference in my life. I was very, very shy and she decided to take a chance and give me the lead part in a class musical. Why me? Her confidence in me gave me the confidence I needed to succeed.

SALLY PLOURDE, *second-grade teacher at Prides Corner Elementary School, Westbrook, Maine*

Faye Smith Gottlieb's 11th-grade English class turned out to be the most mind-shaping, life-altering class I've ever taken. We read in Faye's class—everything from Kafka's *Metamorphosis* to Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* to Ignazio Silone's *Bread and Wine* to *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* We never took tests. We always had discussions. The literature provided a platform for endless conversations, observations, and exchanges where we were constantly in touch with those values and experiences that shaped our world views. We were thinkers. That class shifted the lens through which I viewed life.

VICKI WHITAKER, *language arts and world history teacher at Rocinante High School, Farmington, New Mexico*

Mrs. Baber was my sixth-grade teacher in 1971, the second year of desegregation at Lantrip Elementary school in downtown Houston. The culture was highly turbulent, and violence of some sort was common. One morning we were redirected from our classroom to the library. We later learned why. Our room had been vandalized. Mrs. Baber sat before us and explained that the perpetrators had [defiled] every desk [and] every book....She was so dismayed she wanted to quit teaching. But then she looked into each of our eyes as tears slid silently down her cheeks. She said when she'd thought of each of us, she knew she couldn't leave—that she loved us and could not abandon us. By this time, we were all crying, too.

ELLEN WOOD, *mathematics teacher, Aurora Central High School, Aurora, Colorado*

The most influential educator in my life was my father. He was a head custodian for an elementary school in our home town. Almost every day I realize what a profound impression his work ethic and dedication had on me. At one point, he didn't miss a single day of work for seven years. He also worked a split shift so that he and his crew could leave together knowing the school was ready for the next day.

MARTY MEYER, *head custodian, Fernan Elementary School, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho*

Girls weren't supposed to be smart in math in the mid-60s. I learned things in my eighth-grade math class that year I had never been introduced to before. He caused me to love math, and I realize the importance of making sure each one of my students knows how important and smart they are and that they can achieve anything.

ANDRIA (DEHART) MOON, *sixth-grade language arts teacher at Vail Middle School, Middletown, Ohio*

When I was an eighth-grader, Mrs. Cottongim, was always there to give me encouraging words, help with homework—even advise me on girls! I saw her daily and sought her advice just as often. After Mrs. Cottongim was diagnosed with breast cancer, she still worked as much as possible, even through chemotherapy. She beat the cancer, and continued to be an inspiration to me throughout high school. While in college, when I began to lose interest in my studies, I made a desperate call to Mrs. Cottongim to seek advice. She suggested I look at education as a career. Now I'm finishing up my third year as a teacher. I still talk to Mrs. Cottongim all the time, which is only natural. She's my mom.

WES COTTONGIM, *sixth-grade teacher at Briarwood Elementary in Bowling Green, Kentucky*

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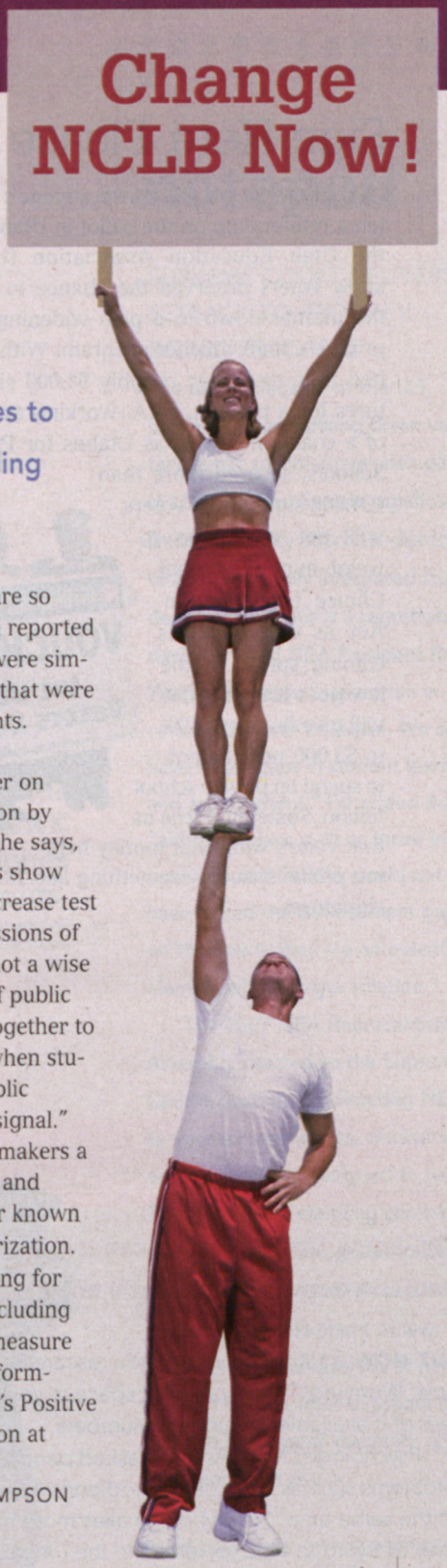

Cheers and Jeers

While one California principal turns to race-based pep rallies to make a difference in high-stakes testing, educators are finding better ways to make their voices heard about NCLB.

HERE'S JUST ANOTHER example of how pressure to meet demands of the No Child Left Behind law (NCLB) has some administrators making unusual decisions: This past school year, Black students walking into a pep rally at Mount Diablo High School in Concord, California, were greeted with jazz and Martin Luther King Jr. posters, while their Asian and Hispanic peers were sent to separate pep rallies. And White students? One told a local paper that organizers opened her rally by calling the kids "White people," then flashed slides with recently released state standardized test scores, encouraging them to aim even higher in the future.

The segregated pep rallies suggest that no matter how hard educators work to help their students bridge the achievement gaps, it's not always enough for antsy administrators.

Mount Diablo High's principal doesn't see what the fuss over the pep rallies is all about—and there most certainly was one when news of the events became public. Beverly Hansen says the assemblies were meant to inspire students to do better while being honest about the differences in test scores among racial and ethnic groups. She says she doesn't know why parents are so upset; racial statistics have been reported for years and those categories were simply represented in the numbers that were given to the students at the events.

That doesn't wash with Jack Jennings, president of the Center on Education Policy. "It's segregation by race, whatever the motivation," he says, adding that the booster sessions show the pressure on educators to increase test scores at all costs. "Separate sessions of students, separated by race, is not a wise decision. One of the purposes of public education is to bring students together to form a common citizenry, and when students are separated by race, public schools are sending a different signal."

NEA is working to send lawmakers a strong signal as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, better known as NCLB, comes up for reauthorization. For more on how NEA is lobbying for effective changes to the law—including using more than test scores to measure student learning and school performance—check out the Association's Positive Agenda for ESEA Reauthorization at www.nea.org/ref?agenda.

—NADINE SIMPSON

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Clap heard 'round the world 18

CHEERLEADERS: GARRY WADE; TROPHY: JONAS STAUB

Sign Here, Please

IT'S BEEN 33 YEARS since anyone's gotten a referendum on the ballot in Utah, but the Utah Education Association (UEA) knew voters deserved the chance to give the thumbs-down to a plan widening the private school voucher program. With limited time to gather roughly 91,000 signatures for a petition, UEA, working as part of a coalition known as Utahns for Public Schools, secured more than 124,000 signatures. Voters will get a chance to weigh in on the Parent Choice in Education Act as early as this coming spring. If the law goes into effect, it will give families $500 to $3,000 per student to spend on private school tuition. Something tells us that voters want that money helping public schools—something like 124,000 signatures.

ESP and Teacher of the Year

"Children do not ask to come into this world; it is our duty as responsible adults to help them become the best they can be."

Veronica Henderson

HOMETOWN: Baltimore, Maryland

POSITION: Office worker, Baltimore County Public Schools Department of Student Support Services

EXPERIENCE: 28+ years

PERSONAL CAUSE: Henderson is a devoted advocate for homeless children. She plans to donate half of her $10,000 prize to a homeless shelter in her community.

SCOUTING REPORT: "Henderson is representative of ESPs across the nation who are working every day to help ensure that every child receives a quality education at a great public school."

—Reg Weaver
NEA President

UPCOMING YEAR: She'll serve as an ambassador for NEA's 383,000 education support professionals, traveling nationwide to speak to her peers.

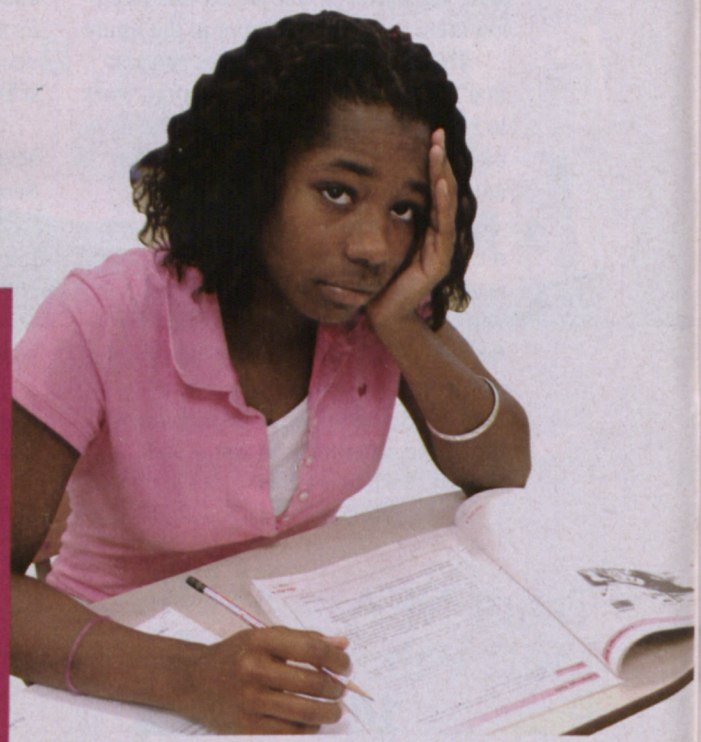
Don't Worry, Be Smarter!

You knew that worrying can trip up your students (or you!) on a math test—that's not a surprise.

BUT NOW a University of Nevada researcher thinks he can explain how: Worrying ties up precious space in your working memory, leaving less of it available for juggling numbers.

Psychologist Mark Ashcroft asked people to do arithmetic problems such as two-column addition while remembering six letters at the same time. "Everybody makes more mistakes on the math when they're trying to hold six letters in their memory, but people with high math anxiety break down more," he says.

One of his graduate students asked test subjects what they were thinking while struggling with this task. "They had more stray thoughts like 'I'm no good at this, I hate math,'" reports Ashcroft. "They spent time thinking about their anxiety."



UTAHNS: MARK MICKELSEN; ESP: ALAN POISSON; STUDENT: DAVID HUMBER

Andrea Peterson

2007 MVP, Teacher

HOMETOWN: Granite Falls, Washington

POSITION: Elementary school music teacher

EXPERIENCE: 10 years

PERSONAL CAUSE: Increasing school funding, which she believes is essential to improving student achievement. See her talk about it at www.nea.org/ref?andrea

ACCOLADES: First person in Washington to earn the National Board Certified Teacher title in early and middle childhood music.

SCOUTING REPORT: "Andrea's outstanding work in making music integral to a student's overall education has not only sparked imaginations, but has allowed her students to succeed in subject areas beyond the arts."

—Reg Weaver, NEA President

UPCOMING YEAR: She'll take a leave of absence from her classroom and serve as a national spokeswoman for public education.

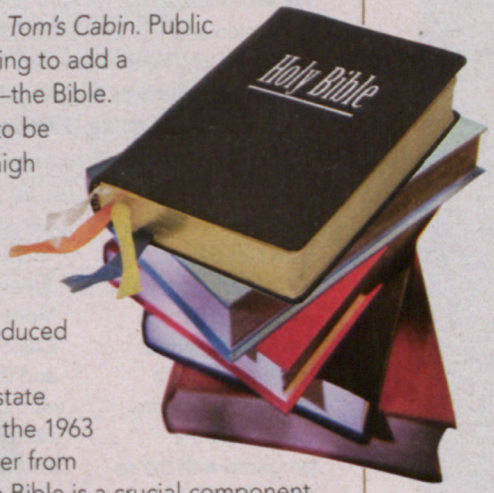
15.5

Average number of **HOURS** some Hawaii public school teachers put into the **WORK DAY,** citing increased paperwork and duties from federal mandates as the main culprits.

SOURCE: JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

IS THERE A TEACHER'S EDITION FOR THIS BOOK?

MOVE OVER *Huckleberry Finn* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* Public school teachers across the country are starting to add a new controversial book to their curriculum—the Bible. Georgia recently became what is believed to be the first state to provide public money for high school elective courses that teach the Old and New Testaments. Similar measures have been considered in other states, but none have passed. And in at least 37 states (460 school districts total), two privately produced curriculums are used to teach the Bible.



Does study of the Bible violate church–state separation laws? Some say yes, pointing to the 1963 Supreme Court decision that removed prayer from schools. But some scholars counter that the Bible is a crucial component of literature, history, music, and film, and as such, students need to have a working knowledge of what lies within its pages.

TEACHER: SANDY SCHAEFFER; BIBLE: ELENA SCHWEITZER; BOOKS: PURESTOCK

+ notepad

SUPREME COURT DELIVERS SETBACK TO *BROWN V. BOARD* PROGRESS

The recent decision of the U.S. Supreme Court striking down voluntary public school integration plans in Louisville and Seattle significantly limits the ability of school districts to achieve racially integrated student bodies. "This is a regrettable decision," said NEA President Reg Weaver, because "separation in education can never be equal. We still have major gaps in student learning and achievement." He added that "although plans such as those in Louisville and Seattle would not have closed the achievement gaps on their own, they are an essential element of the larger solution."

The 2007 NEA Representative Assembly reacted to the Supreme Court's decision by directing NEA to sponsor workshops, seminars, and conferences designed to reaffirm NEA's long-standing commitment to racially integrated public schools, and to establish as a criterion for the endorsement of any presidential candidate his or her support for the right of school districts to implement voluntary school desegregation plans.

Have a great idea?

Send it by mail: *NEA Today*
1201 16th St., N.W.,
Washington, DC 20036

Send it by e-mail:
neatoday@nea.org

Tallying the Toll of Stereotypes

STEREOTYPES ABOUT gender and race do affect students' academic performance and choices. That's the conclusion of a growing body of experiments that show how students' responses to academic questions change when slight differences in the test situation call attention to areas ripe for stereotyping.

In one set of studies, female college students watched a flashing screen and then were asked whether they prefer the arts or math. The flashes were words, displayed so briefly that the women couldn't read them, although they absorbed the meaning subliminally. When the words were "doll" and "lipstick," the young women were more likely to say they prefer the arts over math than when the words were "hammer," "suit," or "cigar."

Researchers also posed the arts-versus-math question after first asking one randomly chosen group of female students about their phone service, and another group about their views on co-ed housing. Those asked the co-ed housing question—calculated to get them thinking about themselves as women—were less likely to prefer math.

Getting Bullies Out of the Bathroom

Unisex lavatories with frosted glass walls could be the key to curbing bullying in the bathroom, according to some school design experts in the U.K. A commission charged with making newly constructed middle and high schools more safe and efficient is recommending blurred glass walls in his-and-her loos. They think unisex toilets will discourage students from lingering. Students had told the commission that they avoided the bathrooms, sometimes not going all day, for fear of being harassed. "There are always people in there smoking, and they are bullies," one 13-year-old student told BBC News. "I don't want my head dunked down the toilet."

CONTEST WINNERS

You Wrote the Songs, America Voted

We asked last spring for your original songs about the education profession and you delivered. Second-place winner John Rockwell explained why he do-re-mi's for his students: "A good song can get your class focused and ready to learn. If you are open enough to sing in front of your students, you are giving them your trust; in turn, they will trust you."

The winners, as determined by online voting:

FIRST PLACE: "No Cow Left Behind." John Carratello, a San Jacinto, California, elementary school teacher, croons a metaphoric country tune about the problems with the so-called No Child Left Behind law.

SECOND PLACE: "Public Education." John Rockwell of Moreno Valley, California, is an English and literature teacher who breaks out his ukulele for this breezy and nostalgic ode to public schools.

THIRD PLACE: "We All Make a Difference." Julie Baker-Anderson, an Omaha, Nebraska, vocal music teacher, sounds like a pro in her morale-boosting melody.

To listen to all the songs, visit www.nea.org/ref?songs.

PURSE: VLADISLAV GURFINKEL; HAMMER: MARIO TARELLO; BATHROOM SIGN: ZALAK; MICROPHONE: LUMINIS

Don't Turn 'Em Off, Tune 'Em In!

Tired of constantly telling your students to stow those pesky iPods? Some educators are encouraging their pupils to listen more often, incorporating them into classwork and homework. While one student records herself speaking Spanish and is graded on pronunciation, another prepares for a history test by listening to oral histories of World War II veterans, and a third listens to Shakespearean sonnets.

Even grade-schoolers are tuning in, boosting literacy skills by using a tiny device called a Playaway. On loan at school libraries nationwide, the mini-MP3s play such titles as *Charlotte's Web*, *Bridge to Terabithia*, and *Little Women*. Check with your librarian, or visit www.playawaydigital.com.

Meanwhile...

The decreasing size of MP3 players is posing a problem in some schools. Students can slip in tiny headphones to listen to audio cheat sheets in homemade podcasts. A Meridian, Idaho, high school banned the devices this spring after a teacher overheard students bragging about doing just that. Similar busts have occurred in California and in Canada.

63 PERCENT of those polled want the law amended or abolished (49 percent are for amendment, 14 percent are for abolishing it)

68 PERCENT of those polled who have public school children want it changed or ended

YOU'VE SEEN HOW NCLB is hurting your students and making your job even more difficult, without good cause. You're not alone. A recent survey of more than 1,000 adults revealed that a majority of them want Congress to rewrite the faulty law or abolish it.

50 OF THE 2007 TEACHERS OF THE YEAR issued a statement calling for changes to make the law effective*

43 PERCENT think the law hasn't been good for schools (Only 34 percent thought it was helping, the rest were unsure)

6 MAJOR EDUCATION GROUPS, including NEA, issued a joint statement calling for changes

*Check out video of these teachers explaining why it's time for a change on NCLB at www.youtube.com/profile?user=NEANCLB

SOURCES: SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE/OHIO UNIVERSITY; NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

BOY: IMAGE SOURCE PINK

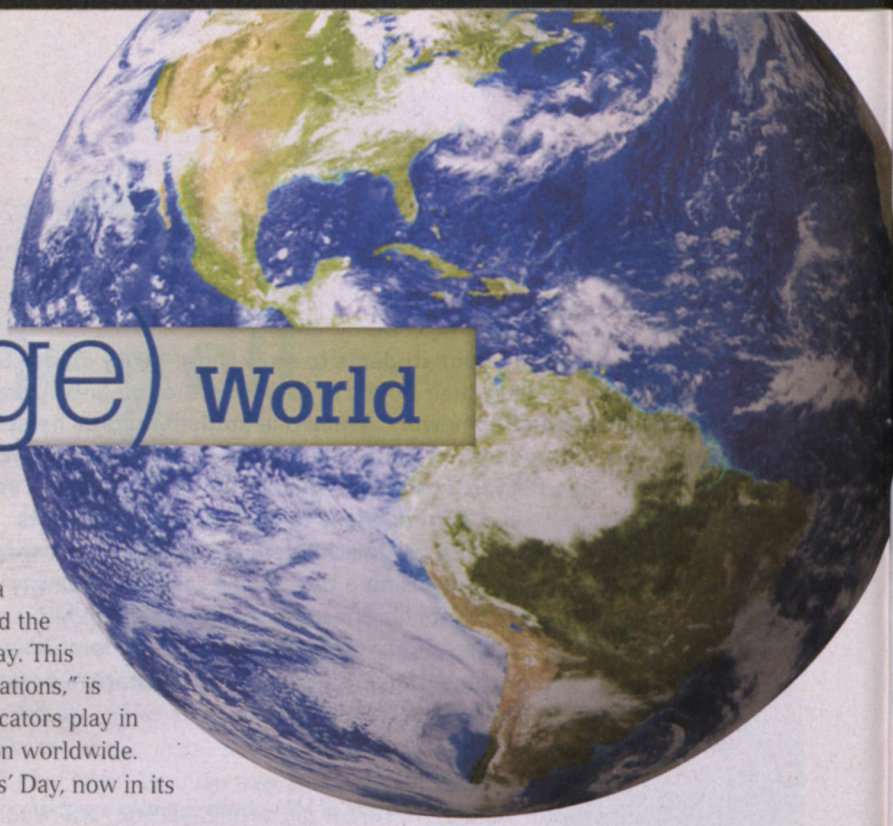
> capitol report

NEA TAKES ON NCLB AND SOCIAL SECURITY PENALTIES

Congress is drafting a new version of the Elementary and Secondary Act, also known as No Child Left Behind, and there seems to be strong support for changing how students are tested, so schools can measure student progress over time instead of based on a single test. Also, many in Congress seem to agree with NEA that the current law does not account for the needs of disabled students or English-language learners. It's unclear what other elements of NEA's Positive Agenda for the ESEA Reauthorization—such as class size reduction—might go in the new bill.

House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Charles Rangel (D-NY) wants a hearing on the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), which cut or eliminate many educators' Social Security benefits. After meeting with NEA President Reg Weaver, Rangel expressed concern about these "very serious issues," adding that the NEA-supported Social Security Fairness Act, which would repeal both the GPO and WEP, "deserves to be examined."

Visit www.nea.org/ref?lacsept to take action on these issues.



It's a (Large) World After All

IF YOU PAUSE on October 5 and give yourself a hand, it could end up being the clap heard 'round the world as educators celebrate World Teachers' Day. This year's theme, "Quality Teachers for Quality Educations," is intended to call attention to the integral role educators play in society and the need for support of the profession worldwide. More than 100 countries observe World Teachers' Day, now in its 41st year.

In 1966, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization joined with the International Labour Organization in releasing a plan that called for teachers to receive fair pay, safe working conditions, and the respect they deserve. Today, that is still not the case for many teachers around the globe. In Colombia, Ethiopia, and Nepal, for example, teachers suffer human rights violations at the hands of their own governments.

Want to get involved? Head to www.ei-ie.org/worldteachersday/en/participation.php for activities you can do locally to celebrate the day.

2

Number of **STATES** in the top 10 for spending on programs serving children that also require high-stakes **EXIT EXAMS** for high school seniors.

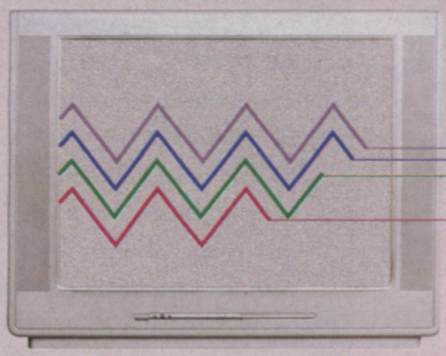
SOURCE: *HOMELAND INSECURITY: AMERICAN CHILDREN AT RISK*, A NEW BOOK BY RESEARCHER MICHAEL PETIT

VITAL STATS

Ill Communication

Students aren't expanding their media literacy, according to educators surveyed this year by Cable in the Classroom. Those polled expressed concern that at a time when students are being inundated with news and information from TV and online, they're not getting the instruction on how to access, interpret, analyze, and create media themselves.

Educators believe their students are spending **4.6 HOURS PER DAY** using TV, radio, MP3 players, video games, computers, and the Internet.



- 80% of parents think a major portion of the responsibility for children's safety on the Web lies with schools.
- 78% of library media specialists say the same.
- 71% of teachers say they teach themselves media literacy for school purposes.
- 60% of educators say their schools' emphasis on media literacy is "less than it should be."

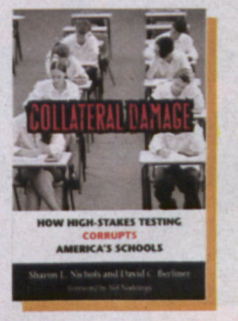
SOURCE: CABLE IN THE CLASSROOM

"You're teachers. You know You know that

GLOBE: SURAVID; TELEVISION: PEROV STANISLAV

Book Focus

TEST TORN



University of Arizona Professor David Berliner heard horror stories from all over while writing *Collateral Damage*, a book about the harm inflicted by high-stakes tests. But the one he tells on his book tour is his own. His grandchild, an avid student and good test-taker who suffers from asthma, started wheezing during a test and asked his teacher to telephone for help. He was told to try to finish first. "We are lucky he didn't die," says Berliner. "What could make a teacher risk her student's life?"

Berliner and co-author Sharon Nichols lay bare the impact of test-and-punish policies: narrowing and distortion of teaching, waste of time and money, cheating, tears, burnout.

They note there's no evidence high-stakes testing lifts achievement.

They also explore alternate ways to hold schools accountable. One example: Britain and several other countries have inspectors visit every school to evaluate and help the staff improve. Independent inspectors won't cover up bad news, Berliner and Nichols say, and on-site assessments can reflect the rich complexity of school life in a way that test scores can't.

Q&A

Lizzie Vishnevsky

AUTHOR, ANTI-BULLYING ACTIVIST

Bullying that Vishnevsky suffered during her schooling inspired her to write *The Power To Be*, a book about coping with school violence. She lives in New Jersey and is working on a book about the dynamics of violence.

In school, you were bullied to the point where you ate your lunch in the bathroom. How do you view that period now?

I look back and see a traumatized, depressed, awkward student who had not yet come into her own. As much as I contemplated revenge inside, I did not want to hurt anyone. I just wanted my fellow students to acknowledge me as a person.

How should students react to bullies?

Stand your ground. Say in a loud voice, "Leave me alone! Who do you think you are, bothering me?!" Make eye contact. Never resort to violence. If a particular bully singles you out, walk to class with friends.

What can we do about student violence?

Hold bullies accountable. Organize an apology session. Try to reach out to the [bully], giving him a chance to communicate what is distressing him. Don't laugh at or encourage bullies.

Who helped you survive that time in your life?

As much as I was hurting, I always held onto faith that things would get better someday. Unfortunately, the lack of intervention by anyone plunged me deeper and deeper into depression and suicidal behaviors.

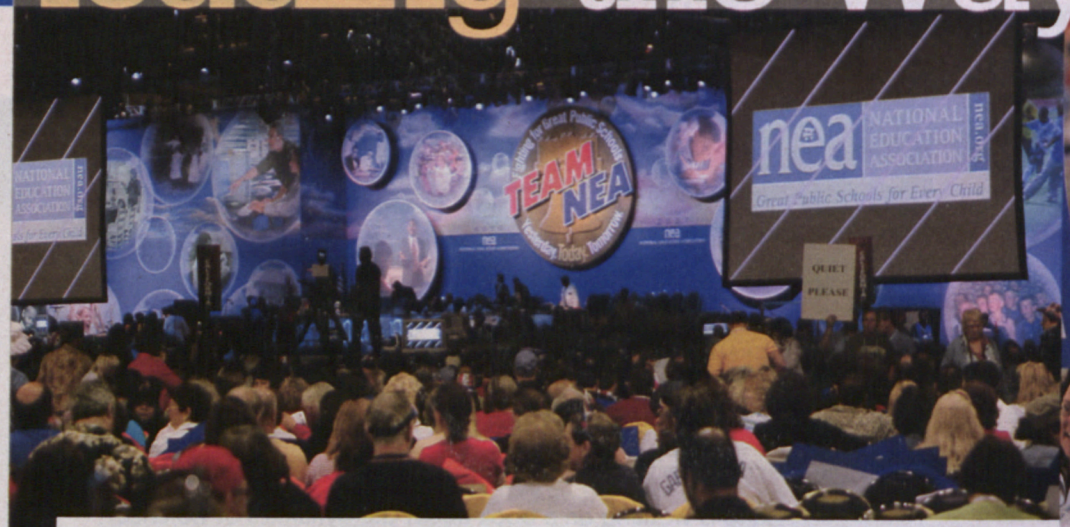
8 Number of **STATES** on the bottom of the list for such spending that require the high-stakes **EXAMS**.

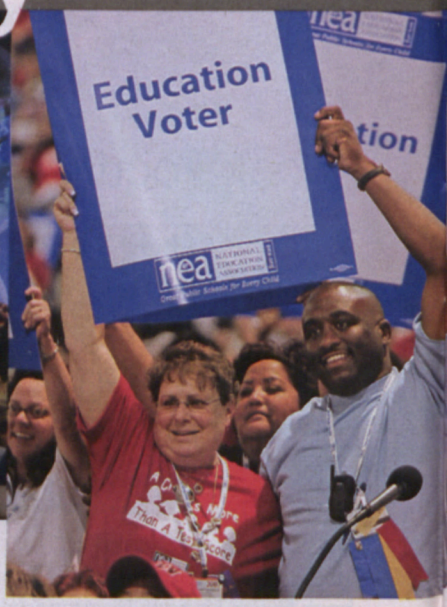
SOURCE: *HOMELAND INSECURITY: AMERICAN CHILDREN AT RISK*, A NEW BOOK BY RESEARCHER MICHAEL PETIT

the secret.
smart is better than stupid."

—ACTOR AND EDUCATION ACTIVIST RICHARD DREYFUSS, SPEAKING AT THE 2007 REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

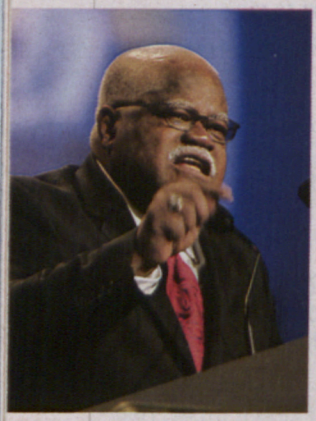
leading the way





MAKING OUR VOICES HEARD

With ESEA and presidential nominations on the line, delegates to the 86th NEA Representative Assembly left with a charge to jump-start the political process.



Delegates to this summer's Representative Assembly return to their schools determined to persuade Congress to shape an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), that will actually leave no child behind—and to make education a central issue in the upcoming presidential election.

"We must insist that our voices are heard," NEA President Reg Weaver told delegates. "And to ensure that we are not only heard, but heeded, we must engage in the political process that is such a vital part of our great democracy."

Delegates jumped into action from the floor of the Pennsylvania Convention Center after Weaver exhorted them to pull out their cell phones and call Congress to urge support for NEA's positive agenda for reforming ESEA, which includes using more than test scores to measure student performance, reducing class sizes to help students learn, and increasing the number of highly qualified teachers. As NEA works with lawmakers to incorporate these changes into the bill's pending reauthorization, members can share information with each other, make contributions to the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education—which works to elect pro-public education candidates—and visit www.nea.org/ref?ESEA to share personal stories and learn how to become involved in the reauthorization effort.

The Association's ongoing efforts to close achievement gaps got a boost when NEA announced its new campaign to engage ethnic and minority communities as public education advocates. Using advertising and Web sites that speak to parents' unique education priorities for their children, the campaign will be piloted in six cities around the country. The spirited kick-off took place during a Minority Community Outreach forum that presented a list of distinguished speakers including Antonio Villaraigosa, mayor of Los Angeles; Hiep Chu, president, National Association for the Education and Advancement of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans; Susan Castillo, Oregon superintendent of public instruction; Carol Juneau, Montana state senator; Gregory W. Porter, Indiana state representative; and Wellington E. Webb, former mayor of Denver.

Delegates also heard from eight presidential candidates, who spoke to NCLB and other education issues (see sidebar). Among those issues: a need to invest in public education to keep America competitive in a global economy, the theme of Weaver's keynote address. By eliminating corporate tax breaks and other loopholes costing America $100 billion, a stronger economic structure and tax base would help guarantee adequate school funding, which, in turn, would ensure that school systems would be able to meet their challenges.

"The thing that gets my gall is that for the past 25 years, each [school reform] recommendation has only come up with part of the puzzle—the assessments and accountability," Weaver said. "People want to hold you accountable, but they never want to get to the economic structure." NCLB's supporters also seem to have forgotten that the "purpose of education is not to score well on standardized tests," he added.

"Even if we meet all the criteria of NCLB, it still won't prepare our children for the 21st century," Weaver said. "The purpose of education is to give young people the tools they will need to lead a fulfilling, satisfying, and meaningful life."

nea.org

VISIT WWW.NEA.ORG/REF?RA07 FOR COVERAGE OF THE CANDIDATES, PLUS MORE ON THE RA.

PHOTOS BY CALVIN KNIGHT, SCOTT ISKOWITZ, AND RICK RUNION

The NEA educator-activists who packed the Pennsylvania Convention Center poured their energy into shaping NEA's agenda for the upcoming year—and beyond. Together, delegates:

WITNESSED HISTORY. NEA celebrated its 150th anniversary throughout the RA, including at an exhibit sponsored by Hyundai and a party sponsored by Target. Delegates also paid tribute to the Little Rock Nine, the Black students who dealt a blow to school segregation in 1957 by attending Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Six of the Little Rock Nine led a rendition of "We Shall Overcome."

CELEBRATED DEMOCRACY. Along with a Fourth of July celebration and actor Richard Dreyfuss touting civics education, NEA presented an exhibit featuring the Magna Carta and other historical documents at Philadelphia's National Constitution Center with support from Verizon Communications, Bank of America, and Prudential. For his role in arranging the exhibit, NEA President Reg Weaver was honored with a stone column bearing his name at England's Lincoln Cathedral, the document's permanent home.

HONORED THEIR OWN. Delegates congratulated 2007 Teacher of the Year Andrea Peterson, a Washington state music teacher who raised thousands of dollars to revitalize music education, and 2007 Education Support Professional of the Year Veronica Henderson, a 27-year veteran of Baltimore County public schools and an advocate for homeless children. The crowd welcomed the RA's 13 international guests, and cheered as NEA recognized Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi with the 2007 NEA Friend of Education Award.

BROKE A RECORD. Delegates far exceeded fundraising goals for the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education, which helps elect pro-education candidates, bringing in over $1.6 million.

DECLARED A NEW BILL OF RIGHTS. NEA President Reg Weaver outlined a new "education bill of rights," which includes universal preschool, small class sizes, well-trained and well-paid educators, challenging curriculums and quality textbooks, active parent participation, adequate and equitable funding, help for English-language learners and special needs students, a high school diploma or GED, equal educational opportunities, and the use of multiple measures to determine student learning.

ELECTED NEW LEADERS. Christy Levings of Kansas and Paula Monroe of California were elected to the NEA Executive Committee. Laura Montgomery of Arkansas begins her term as president of the National Council for Education Support Professionals, and Jim Rice of Massachusetts is the new president of the National Council for Higher Education.

ON RECORD

Eight presidential candidates spoke during the 2007 RA. A recurring theme was frustration with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, better known as No Child Left Behind:

BIDEN

HUCKABEE

CLINTON

KUCINICH

DODD

OBAMA

EDWARDS

RICHARDSON

Sen. Joe Biden (D-DE): "You cannot build a new economy by having our children constantly fill out bubbles. You have to free their minds."

Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-NY): "We need a new approach. One that is balanced—that puts learning, not memorizing, front and center in American education again."

Sen. Chris Dodd (D-CT): "Test scores alone are not the only measure of a student's achievement. What about a student's rate of improvement?"

Former Sen. John Edwards (D-NC): "A test does not tell us what we need to do to help our children to learn.... A test does not give us the information we need to make our public schools better."

Former Gov. Mike Huckabee (R-AR): "I'm astonished there are not more Republican candidates here. Do they not think education is important? Or are they just afraid of the NEA?"

Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH): "We do not want to defeat the learning experience and make it all about testing, because then all you have is a generation of test-takers, not a generation of visionaries."

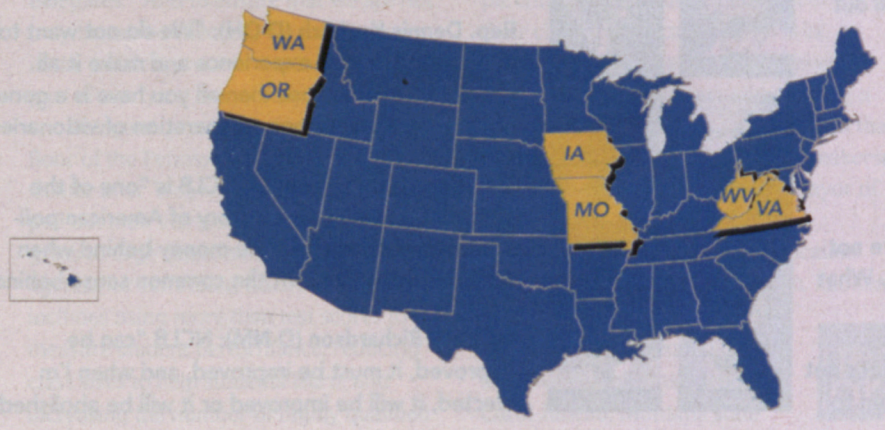
Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL): NCLB is "one of the emptiest slogans in the history of American politics.... [Lawmakers] left the money behind when they passed NCLB. Left the common sense behind."

Gov. Bill Richardson (D-NM): NCLB "can be improved, it must be improved, and when I'm elected, it will be improved or it will be abolished."

SALARY

Wins in Iowa, Washington

It doesn't hurt to have a former teacher in the governor's mansion. Iowa Gov. Chet Culver **signed a bill that will take Iowa teacher salaries from 40th in the nation to 25th** by the 2008–09 school year. Over the next two school years, the state will put an extra $145 million into teacher salaries. That means each of the state's 36,000 teachers will receive total average increases of $5,400. The bill puts into law several of the **Iowa State Education Association's** (ISEA) priorities, including an increase in minimum salaries by $1,000, and provisions for children to have access to a school nurse, librarian, and counselor. In Des Moines, a new contract provides a nearly 10 percent increase in salary and benefits over the next two years. Des Moines teachers continue to receive fully paid health insurance premiums, a benefit unique among metro-area districts. Alan Young, president of the **Des Moines Education Association** (DMEA), says the health benefits helped convince many teachers to stay in the city instead of moving to the suburbs. In Washington state, the recently approved two-year state budget grants **$5,000 annual bonuses for National Board Certified Teachers,** with an additional $5,000 if they teach in high-poverty schools. In addition, K–12 educators will receive a voter-mandated 3.7 percent cost-of-living adjustment. The **Washington Education Association** (WEA) was instrumental in guiding passage of the budget, which also provides new funding for community and technical college faculty salary increases and salary equity for part-time instructors.



BARGAINING

Missouri Breaks 60-Year Precedent

The Missouri Supreme Court overturned a 60-year legal precedent when it ruled recently that **teachers and other public employees have a constitutional right to engage in collective bargaining** with their government employers. The ruling stated that although governments aren't bound to reach work agreements with labor unions, once they do, they cannot back out of the contracts. The decision resulted from a labor dispute involving the Independence School District, though members of **Missouri NEA** (MNEA) say it will have broader implications. Missouri has 68,500 teachers in 524 public school districts that can now more effectively join unions to negotiate salaries, benefits, and workplace rights with local school boards. MNEA currently represents about 33,000 teachers and education support professionals.

HEALTH

Virginia, Oregon Boost Benefits

Gains in benefits during the last legislative session left the **Virginia Education Association** (VEA) in good health. The bill VEA helped to pass provides **additional dollars to all current and future recipients of health care credits.** For a teacher with 30 years of service, the credit increased from $75 per month to $120 per month. Meanwhile, the **Oregon Education Association** (OEA) is helping the state manage health care costs for education employees by working with a broad coalition on a bill that **establishes a statewide health insurance savings pool for public school employees.** The bill encourages the state's school districts to pool their resources and purchase health care service in bulk. The money saved by reducing fees to insurance brokers and other special interests will stay in local districts. The bill also eliminates duplication of administrative fees and other services.

PENSIONS

Plan Dispute Goes to State Supreme Court

A dispute over the merger of West Virginia's two teacher pension programs will be decided by the state Supreme Court. Members of the state Consolidated Public Retirement Board voted to appeal a county circuit court ruling that derailed the merger. In 2005, the **West Virginia Education Association** (WVEA) supported a bill in the legislature that would offer a one-time chance for all participants in the state's newer defined-contribution plan to return to the old Teachers Retirement System, which guarantees benefits based on salary and years of service. Though most enrollees voting in a special election in 2006 endorsed the merger, about 1,000 account holders sued to block it. The circuit court judge ruled that the newer plan's individual investment accounts are the enrollees' private property, barring them from being combined into the older plan's general fund.

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GETTING PERSONAL

Through face-to-face contact with legislators, Illinois ESPs helped pass a state law that limits outsourcing. BY JOHN ROSALES

When school district officials vote to outsource school services, the ripple effect is devastating—and education support professionals (ESPs) suffer most.

Short-sighted decisions that cost ESPs their jobs often mean that the school loses employees who live, shop, vote, and volunteer in the district where they work. Students and parents lose dedicated employees, who are often their neighbors. Even elected officials benefit from the advocacy of ESPs who attend political rallies and fundraisers, as well as PTA and school board meetings.

To counter the tide of privatization in Illinois schools, a group of ESPs, Illinois Education Association (IEA) staff, labor groups, and elected officials joined forces to pass statewide legislation that would provide a measure of job security for non-certified employees—and create awareness of the losses experienced when ESPs are replaced with subcontractors.

From left to right: **Dave Arnold, David Moore, Dave Massena, Nancy Arnold, Mary Moore,** and **Joyce Poelker** joined forces to fight outsourcing efforts in their state.

> "It's awesome that the little guy can meet and campaign with [state] senators and accomplish something like this." —**Dave Massena**

ESPs were at the nexus of this new anti-privatization political force. "It's more than a job for us," says Dave Massena, a custodian who is co-president of the Greenville Educational Support Staff in Illinois "It's our career."

The effort generated a bill that was passed by both chambers of the Illinois Legislature in May. At press time, the bill (Third Party Subcontracting of School Services) awaits the governor's signature to become law. If signed by the governor, the bill places reasonable requirements on school districts and contractors to actually demonstrate that subcontracting will save money. The bill requires a sensible timeline for decision-making, including public discussion and input if school districts so desire.

"We formed a productive collaboration where everybody stepped up," Massena says. "It's awesome that the little guy can meet and campaign with [state] senators and accomplish something like this."

The bill states that if ESPs have a union contract, their employer cannot subcontract until it expires. The bill also requires any subcontractor to pay comparable benefits for the same work.

The days of replacing school employees who have good benefits with subcontracted employees who have none are over, says IEA UniServ Director Marcus Albrecht.

The process began in 2005. After deciding that subcontracting was a critical issue, IEA governance identified state Sen. Deanna Demuzio as a possible supporter of legislation to defend job security.

"We filled up two cars and drove to her house...and told our stories," Albrecht says. After several hours, the group secured her support, then later that of state Sen. Don Harmon.

ESPs personalized the need for the bill by detailing individual hardships because of low pay and the threat of outsourcing, he adds. After garnering support from ESP locals in different parts of the state, Albrecht and other UniServ representatives sat down with ESP leaders to discuss the language and other specifics that should be contained in the bill, later drafted by IEA.

By 2006, Stacy Burroughs, IEA's ESP specialist, had organized a statewide task force on the bill, while IEA staff member Brian Rous worked the halls of the statehouse. He also developed alliances with the American Federation of Teachers and other community groups. After passing both chambers of the legislature, "the rest is history," says Rous.

nea.org

IN HIS BIMONTHLY COLUMN, ESP DAVE ARNOLD CALLS THE SUBCONTRACTING BILL "THE GREATEST LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENT FOR ILLINOIS ESPS SINCE WE WON COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS." READ MORE AT WWW.NEA.ORG/REF?PRIVATIZATIONWIN.

PHOTOS: KRISTEN SCHMID SCHURTER

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The 2007 Expo Classroom Makeover Contest (the "Contest") begins at 12:00:00 a.m. Central Standard Time ("CST") on January 21, 2007 and ends at 11:59:59 p.m. Central Daylight Time ("CDT") on October 15, 2007 (the "Promotion Period"). During the Promotion Period, there will be two entry periods for two separate prize pools (each an "Entry Period"). All entries for Entry Period #1 must be received between 12:00:00 a.m. CST on January 21, 2007 and 11:59:59 p.m. CDT on April 1, 2007, and all entries for Entry Period #2 must be received between 12:00:00 a.m. CDT on April 2, 2007 and 11:59:59 p.m. CDT on October 15, 2007. For complete Official Rules and to enter, visit www.expomarkers.com. Complete the online entry form and submit along with (a) an original essay of 100 words or less (written in English) describing why entrant's classroom deserves a makeover ("Essay"), and (b) a photograph ("Photo") of entrant's classroom which demonstrates the need for a makeover. No other method of entry will be accepted or acknowledged. The Contest is open only to K-12 teachers employed by a state-accredited educational institution (public or private) in the 50 United States or D.C. who are legal residents of the 50 United States or D.C., and are 21 years of age or older as of 1/20/07. All entries will be judged based on the following equally weighted criteria: (a) most compelling story with regard to need for a classroom makeover as set forth in Essay, (b) need for a classroom makeover based upon the Photograph, and (c) creativity of Essay content. The five (5) highest scoring entries for each Entry Period shall be declared the "finalists." The five finalists for Entry Period #1 will be determined on or about April 9, 2007. The five finalists for Entry Period #2 will be determined on or about October 22, 2007. Each of the finalists will then have their Essay and Photo along with their first and last name, school name and state of residency posted online at www.expomarkers.com. The public may then visit the web site and vote for the entrant who needs a classroom makeover most. Voting for Entry Period #1 begins at 12:00:00 a.m. CDT on April 25, 2007 and ends at 11:59:59 p.m. CDT, on June 4, 2007. Voting for Entry Period #2 begins at 12:00:00 a.m. CDT on October 31, 2007 and ends at 11:59:59 p.m. CST, on December 3, 2007. Limit one vote per person per Entry Period. Limit one vote per email address per Entry Period. Two (2) Grand Prize Awards: For each Entry Period, the school named on the entry form of the finalist who receives the most votes during the applicable Voting Period will receive a Grand Prize consisting of a $25,000 classroom makeover. Eight (8) First Place Prizes: A First Place Prize consisting of a $5,000 classroom makeover will be awarded to each of the schools named on the entry forms of the four non-Grand Prize winning finalists in each Entry Period.

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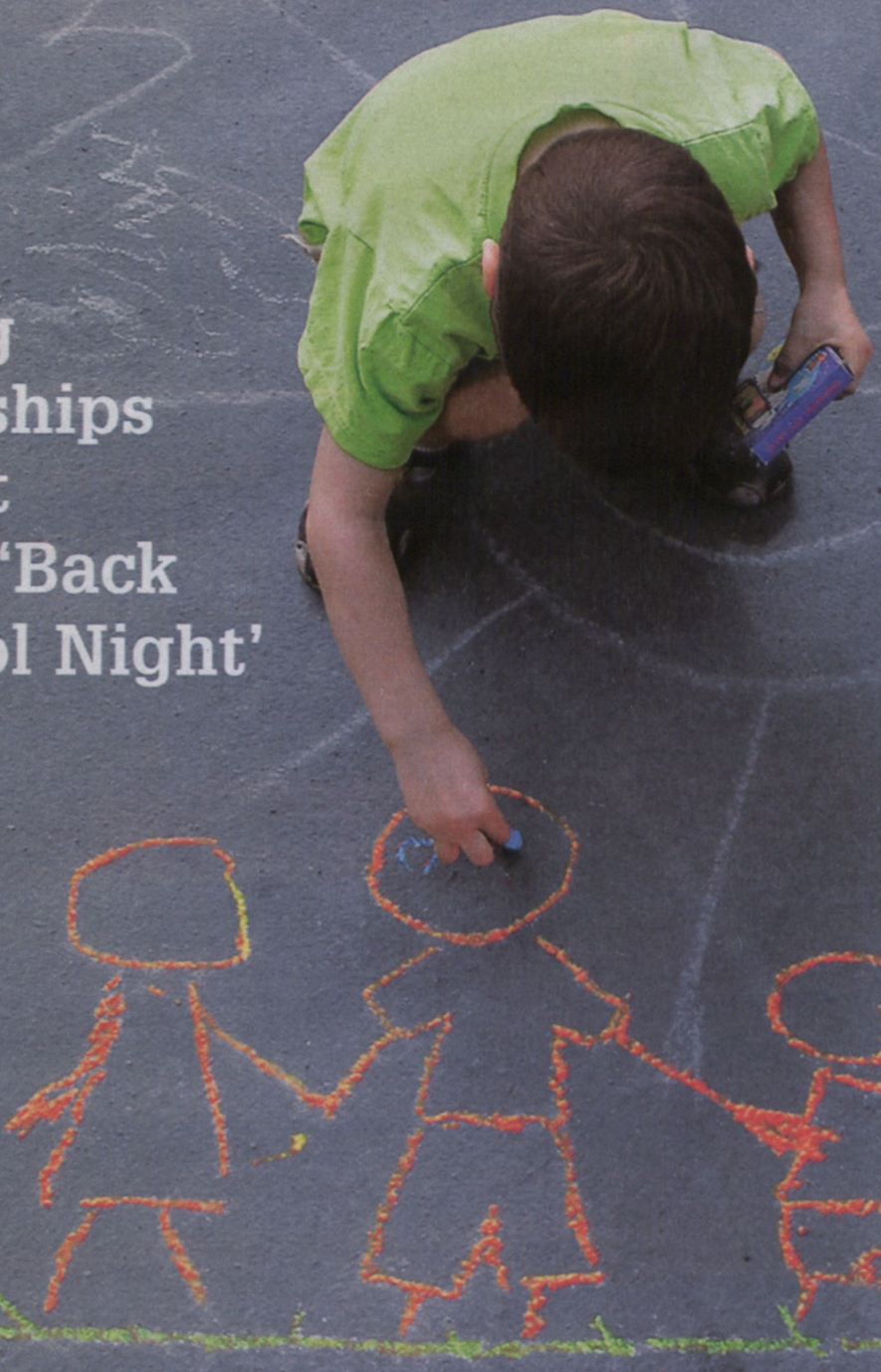
Parents in

Building partnerships that last beyond 'Back to School Night'



the Picture

BY CINDY LONG

Often the lone volunteer in her sons' classrooms, Amy Anderson used to make assumptions about the other, missing parents—that they didn't care, or that their priorities were somehow out of whack. That was before she met Lorelei.

Anderson and Lorelei were neighbors on a military base in Wichita Falls, Texas, whose boys were friendly in school. Once, as their sons played together, Lorelei commented that she admired Anderson for volunteering at the school and wished she could, too. Only she didn't think she belonged there.

A small town girl from rural Alabama with a syrupy southern drawl, Lorelei never finished school. To supplement her enlisted husband's salary, she went to work nights at a local strip club just off base. She was afraid she'd be unwelcome at the school and would embarrass her children. It was just as well—as a high school dropout, she didn't think she'd contribute much anyway.

"I convinced her to come in with me while I was volunteering so she could see that there are no academic skills necessary for handing out juice boxes," says Anderson. "You should have seen her son's face when she walked into the classroom. It just lit up."

As a fellow parent and neighbor, Anderson was able to accomplish what no "Back to School Night" flyer or invitation to the PTA meeting could have. She brought a parent who had been hiding in the shadows through the school doors. Since that first day with Anderson, Lorelei volunteers regularly. And rather than embarrassing them, her presence at school is helping her children succeed. Research over the past two decades consistently confirms the link between parent involvement and student achievement.

Anderson's actions exemplify what Eileen Kugler, author of *Debunking the Middle-Class Myth: Why Diverse Schools Are Good For All Kids*, says schools need to know about getting more parents and guardians involved—nothing beats being invited by a peer. Schools that leverage parents' relationships with each other, she says, can build networks of active parents.

"[B]y increasing opportunities for parents to be involved, they not only help those families, but they build links among all families in the community, strengthening the school culture," Kugler writes.

As Amy Anderson discovered, sometimes all it takes is a friendly invitation from one parent to another. In the right hands, that invitation can even break long-standing cultural, language, and socioeconomic barriers.

Several years ago, Jeaneth Lazima went to a PTA meeting at her oldest daughter's elementary school in Virginia. She stood along the back wall alone. "I didn't feel welcome," she says. "Everyone was in groups. Nobody talked to me." She decided not to go back.

Lazima is from Guatemala, her husband is from El Salvador, and the family speaks Spanish at home. Like so many immigrant families, the couple moved to America so their children could have a better education and more opportunity. So Lazima was dismayed when her daughter was placed in classes she knew weren't advanced enough. "She knew a lot of English," says Lazima. "Still, they put her back, and she got behind in reading and writing." The experience frustrated her, but Lazima didn't feel confident about her English or know enough about the system to intervene.

"Immigrant parents are eager to become more involved in school, but many don't understand the expectations of the American system and don't feel 100 percent welcome," says Kugler, whose children graduated from Annandale High School, the same school Lazima's daughter now attends.

Annandale's students come from 85 countries and speak 40 languages. In an effort to engage as many of these parents as possible, in 2005 Kugler established the Immigrant Parent Leadership Initiative, a series of classes and workshops to introduce parents to other parents, to teachers, and to helping their kids navigate the high school system.

> "Schools that leverage parents' relationships with each other can build networks of active parents." —Eileen Kugler

Drawing the parents in took time—and many, many phone calls. One call Kugler made was to invite Jeaneth Lazima back to the school. "I started going, and learned so much so fast," she says. At the workshops, held in both Spanish and English, Lazima met parents from all over the world—Bolivia, Ethiopia, Algeria, Pakistan, and Vietnam. They discussed differences between their home countries' educational systems and methods for motivating their children and helping with homework. They learned how to talk to teachers and how to help their kids plan for the future. They toured the school library and the career center and heard guest speakers, including college admissions officers. In the end, Lazima learned

PHOTO LEFT: LOSEVSKY PAVEL

KIM WILSON

The 'Partner Parent'

Meet Kim Wilson. The Virginia resident is a regular in the classrooms of her second-grader son and preschooler daughter. She can be counted on to chaperone field trips or bake cupcakes, and she rarely misses a PTA meeting.

Maybe you already know Kim. She's the coveted "partner parent"—the one teachers everywhere hope will walk into their classrooms on back to school night. She's college-educated, lives in a safe, leafy, middle-class neighborhood, and drives a minivan. She cares deeply about her children's education, helps them with homework, encourages extracurricular activities, and is assured they will both go to college.

Here's something you might not know—she's feeling a little frustrated.

Wilson may look like the cookie-cutter volunteer parent who has graced American classrooms since the 1950s, but she's no June Cleaver. She's a modern mom balancing a 30-hour-a-week management position at a local animal shelter with raising two children in a media-saturated, technology-driven world. She's willing to pour punch at the occasional class party, and she'll continue going to PTA meetings, but she'd like to be engaged in more meaningful ways.

"It's awkward because you don't want to overstep your bounds," says Wilson. "I really want to know more about how my children are doing, and you can only learn so much from an annual teacher conference and a progress report. I'd like to know what subjects they enjoy, if they struggle with things, and what can I help them with."

The authors of *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family/School Partnerships* explain how old-fashioned modes of parent involvement must be traded for a new model in which families and school staff together decide meaningful ways for more parents to be engaged in their children's learning. The best way to accomplish this, says co-author Anne Henderson, is to be clear from the outset about how parents can participate and be willing to teach them how.

"So many parents say 'I don't know what I'm supposed to do, I don't know how to help, I'm not sure how, or if, I should check homework,'" Henderson says. "Be clear with parents about what they can do, and then lead the way. Hold a series of workshops for helping children with math. Hold a math night, a science project night, or a night devoted to taming the homework monster. Research shows that parents will use that information and kids will do better as a result."

JEANETH L

AZIMA

PHOTOS: LEFT: PATRICK RYAN; RIGHT: SANDY SCHAEFFER

how to advocate for her children.

"I don't get as upset if there's a problem, because I know how to talk to their teachers and counselors," she says. When a report card arrived with a few C's, Lazima was able to discuss her daughter's academic strengths and weaknesses with the teachers so that, together, they could help the girl do better. Lazima also learned why her kids should take a variety of classes and participate in extracurricular activities. "Now I know my daughter is on the path to college," she says.

To engage more parents like Lazima, Kugler recommends finding at least one bilingual parent from each immigrant group who's willing to help. They can translate flyers, act as interpreters at parent-teacher conferences and PTA meetings, or simply sit down with parents new to the school system to act as mentors. They can also go out into the community, along with teachers and other school leaders, to cultural festivals, houses of worship, parades, soccer matches—any community event that draws families—to help introduce parents to the school and welcome their involvement.

Anna Marie Weselak, immediate past president of the National PTA, applauds new efforts to engage parents, guardians, and family members. But on a practical level, how do you reach those who can't take time off during the day, who work nights and feel overwhelmed and overburdened? You have to meet them halfway, she says.

"When I was in school, my parents were both in the PTA," says Weselak. "Parents automatically joined, no questions asked. Today, we're going to parents instead of waiting for them to come to us."

Now you'll see the PTA at high school sporting events talking to parents who have come to see their kids play. You'll see parent volunteers offering rides to parents without transportation. You'll see the PTA provide childcare so that parents with very young children can attend meetings. Weselak also recommends creating more opportunities for parents to come into school. Most working

> "When I was in school,...parents automatically joined [the PTA,] no questions asked. Today, we're going to parents instead of waiting for them to come to us." —**Anna Marie Weselak**

parents have a lunch hour—set up meetings at that time, or allow parents to eat with their children, she says.

Offering family members school access during mealtimes, and even providing parents with free or reduced-price meals, helps bring in low-income and time-strapped working parents. Weselak once observed a father eating lunch with his daughter in a Montana elementary school. "The dad comes in the two days a week that he doesn't work nights. His little girl said if she didn't see him on those days at lunch, she wouldn't see him at all." Another school holds a "Donuts for Dads" program that encourages working fathers to come to school early, before their shifts start, to eat breakfast with their kids. There's even legislation currently in Congress that would, among other things, grant parents time off from work to attend parent-teacher conferences and other school events. Introduced by Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-CA), "The Balancing Act" is supported by NEA.

But there's another group of parents that still avoids getting involved. They are the silent, alienated parents. This hardest-to-reach group had bad experiences when they were in school, feels uncomfortable with teachers, and is intimidated

The 'Helicopter Parent'

Meet Shani Weber. She's an articulate mother of two and a former teacher with master's degrees in early childhood development and special education. She's the County Council PTA representative and room mother for both of her kids' classes. "My involvement level is high," she says. "And because of my educational background, I'm a teacher's worst nightmare. I'm an Apache helicopter."

When Weber's son started kindergarten, she met with the principal and his teacher to let them know that she'd tested him with the appropriate developmental protocols and determined that he was gifted. She asked how the school accommodated exceptional kindergartners. "They acted as if I was exaggerating Alec's abilities," she says. "They encounter lots of parents who don't see their kids in an accurate light, and they thought I was one of them."

But Alec was advanced in reading—so advanced, in fact, that his resource-strapped teacher put him in a corner with a basket of books to read by himself. He was so advanced in math, he was placed alone in front of a computer with fourth-grade level math software while the other students spent time interacting with each other and their teacher.

"I know teachers are overwhelmed with [No Child Left Behind] requirements," Weber says, "but that's my son sitting all by himself with a basket of books!"

Weber is a reasonable woman who was willing to work with her son's teachers to find solutions. But there are far more aggressive helicopter parents who threaten, intimidate, and bully educators into meeting their demands. In *Queen Bee Moms & Kingpin Dads*, author Rosalind Wiseman writes about a mother of a 5-year-old complaining to a teacher about giving her son an "E" for excellent rather than an "O" for outstanding. "Our family doesn't do average," the mother insisted.

> "They encounter lots of parents who don't see their kids in an accurate light, and they thought I was one of them." — Shani Weber

In her book, Wiseman goes into the minds of helicopter parents. For example, when a parent says "I'm my child's best advocate—I'm acting in the best interests of my child," Wiseman deciphers the true meaning: "I'm the only person who can be trusted to do right by my child. I have to keep close tabs on everyone else to be sure my child isn't undermined, unfairly treated, or denied resources or opportunities that are rightly his."

Wiseman explains that the best way to handle this type of parent, and all parents, is to treat them as allies and experts on their children.

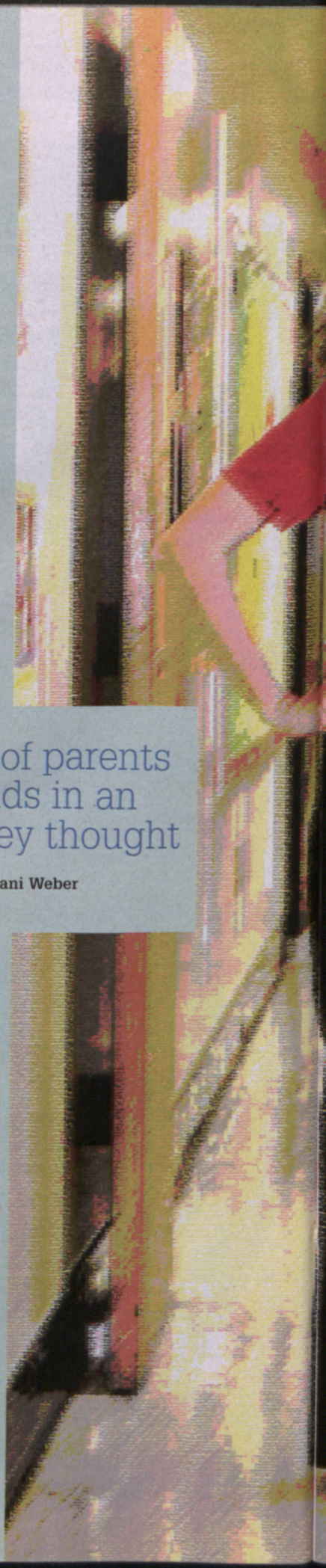
Just as a doctor expects parents to come into the examining room with their children to explain symptoms and answer questions, so should a teacher rely on the expertise and knowledge a parent has to offer. Even a parent who exaggerates is still the expert.

"Deal with the parents like you deal with your students," says Wiseman. "You give your students the right to argue with you, to challenge you, to be engaged in a process with you, but in a certain structure and with limitations. You need to facilitate that with parents."

The overly involved helicopter parent can be aggressive, but put a group of them together and re-channel their energy—into study groups for their gifted children, for example—and you've provided a positive outlet for their Type A traits.

Some of the most heavily involved parents are driven and successful in their fields. Take advantage of that drive and tap into their expertise, *Beyond the Bake Sale* co-author Anne Henderson says. Invite a parent with a legal career to talk to classes about the Constitution and government. "It signals that they have something to contribute, that they're experts, too, and not just on their children," she says.

In her book, Henderson explains how power-sharing can defuse the ticking time bomb of an angry, hovering parent. "The starting point for teachers and administrators is to see families as partners and not simply as clients or guests," she writes. "Every parent wants to feel they are a partner with you in helping their child succeed."



SHANI WEBER

PHOTO: CHARLES VOTAW

by the system. Maybe these parents blame themselves if their child isn't doing well; maybe they don't trust educators. Some grew up under the shadow of segregation and were mistreated or discriminated against in school. Others, like Lorelei from Wichita Falls, are simply afraid of being judged.

This is where creative community building comes most into play. In *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family/School Partnerships,* authors Anne Henderson, Karen Mapp, Vivian Johnson, and Don Davies write about Bruce-Monroe Elementary School, which sits between the Columbia Heights and Shaw neighborhoods in Washington, D.C.—home to mostly Black, Hispanic, and Vietnamese families but whose teachers are predominantly White. To help build relationships between the school and the community, the PTA organized a neighborhood walk, led by the school custodian, a longtime area resident. Teachers, education support professionals, and parent volunteers visited community-owned businesses, like an African culture bookstore, where the owner agreed to share his knowledge with classes. They met families and heard about residents' plans for their neighborhood. And residents saw interested, concerned school staff making an effort to get to know them. They began to build trust.

Another approach is to involve parents in their children's schoolwork. We need to recognize it as involvement, says Henderson, when parents talk to their kids about school, encourage them, and get involved with homework. "Sometimes, they might not know the best way to help," she says, "but educators can show them the way."

Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University tested and developed the Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) program, in which teachers design homework that requires children to talk to someone at home about the assignment. In a 1997 study of 700 Black middle schoolers, she found that TIPS improved student writing skills, grades, and test scores, and that parent involvement increased.

Cecily Myart-Cruz, who teaches English at Ralph Waldo Emerson Middle School in Los Angeles, didn't need a study to prove TIPS works. Every morning when her students come into the classroom, they have a five-minute "quick write" about a daily quote Myart-Cruz writes on the board. Just in time for the 30th anniversary of *Star Wars,* she asked her students to write their thoughts about the quote: "May the Force be with you."

"They like pop culture quotes best," she says. "It trips them out."

Every night, the students take home their quick write and share it with their parents, who also respond to the quote. She's had 100 percent participation from parents across the entire race and class spectrum.

"In middle school, students tend to not want to talk to their parents. It's uncool. But parental involvement is important at every level...especially after they get older," says Myart-Cruz. "My parents were working-class people, but at dinner time, they talked to me about things they saw in the news, or current events, and asked me how I felt about it. I wanted my students to share that with their parents."

By broadening the definition of parent involvement, educators acknowledge the value of parental guidance and participation in student learning—that the parent has something meaningful and important to add, which, in turn, fosters more engagement.

"The bottom line is that we all want the same thing," says Myart-Cruz. "Every single parent wants their child to succeed, to go to college. I tell them I'm living my dream every day that I walk into this classroom because I'm molding minds and shaping the future. But I need their help. This is where it starts." nea

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VISIT WWW.NEA.ORG/REF?PARENTPARTNERS FOR RESOURCES ON WORKING WITH PARENTS, A LOOK AT PARENTS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS, AND MORE.

Coming Home

Educator-soldiers pick up their lives.

NEA members are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, and many more have served in past wars. What's it like coming home and back to the classroom? Members share their stories.

For more, visit www.nea.org/ref?soldiers

'Did you see Osama?'

I was a seventh-grade Spanish teacher at a middle school in the Bronx, loving my new career and going out with my friends every weekend, when I was called up with my Army National Guard unit in the spring of 2004.

At first I was in denial. My contract with the military was expiring in just five months, and I did not think I was going to go off to combat.

I broke the news to my principal and in a matter of a couple of hours, the whole staff knew. Next on the list were my students. One girl started crying. She became distant after my announcement. I later got a letter from her saying she felt all the important male figures in her life were abandoning her. I felt like I had failed her.

My unit left for Iraq in October. We were involved in heavy fighting and my squad leader and another squad member were killed. I was slightly injured by a roadside bomb.

I came back in September 2005 and went to work the very next week. I wanted my life back, and I did not want my students to have substitute teachers for a month. But as soon as I came into the room, I felt the tension. The students did not know how to react. They all knew where I had been and wanted to ask questions: "How was it in Iraq?" "Did you take showers there?" "Did you see Osama Bin Laden?"

The main thing they asked was, how many people did you kill? Maybe that's because their idea of war was videogames. I told them I didn't want questions like that—too personal. I wanted them to ask about Iraqi kids, and some students did—how they dress, what we can do to help them. Our best missions were escorting civil affairs teams doing reconstruction—helping out, not fighting.

As soldiers, we had a very limited relationship with children, but every week, we would buy candy at our PX and when we went into a neighborhood, we would throw candy to the kids. When kids came out, we knew we were safe. If they didn't, we knew we were about to get hit.

RAFAEL VASQUEZ, Bronx, New York

'Does everybody live in tents?'

I was called up in the Reserves in March 2003. I had an 18-month-old son, and we didn't know what was going to happen. We were nervous.

I first served as a combat military police officer, escorting large vehicles up and down the main supply route, and then I was switched to helping customs inspectors make sure American soldiers didn't take antiquities with them when they left Iraq.

After four and a half months in theater, I tore a knee ligament and was evacuated to the United States, a month before my younger son was born. I rode six hours from the hospital where I was recovering from surgery to the hospital where my wife was in labor, and I was there in a wheelchair when she gave birth.

When I returned to teaching, it amazed me how far removed my students were from the war. I take to heart my job as a world geography and history teacher to inform my students of the world around them and how everything impacts them. I'm trying to show them that other cultures are not so different from their own. One student asked me, "Does everybody in Iraq live in tents?" I said, "Do we all live in log cabins?" Students don't realize that Baghdad looks like Baltimore or Boston or Orlando: It's got highways and skyscrapers and people driving cars.

The war changed me. I take things more personally now. When I see a kid crying, it affects me more than before. I'm also more abrasive. When you tell someone in the Army to do something, they do it. Outside, you have to be careful how you say things. My children have helped me adjust to that more than anybody.

TIMOTHY BOULAY, Sebring, Florida

Rafael Vasquez and the children of Iraq (above), and back home (left).

PHOTOS BOTTOM: DIMA GAVRYSH; TOP: COURTESY OF RAFAEL VASQUEZ

'It helps me teach tolerance.'

Having served for 20 years, and deployed as a commander to Bosnia-Herzegovina during the war with Serbia in Kosovo, I can tell you it sure added stories to my box of stuff. In the classroom, it helps me teach tolerance and Dr. King's vision.

I use the example of Brčko in Bosnia, where one town went against the opinions of the rest of the country. All the factions in town put aside their differences and worked together. They set up their own government. All parties had an equal say—and it worked!

Public support of us as individuals has been wonderful, but the message of supporting the troops can be hollow when those deployed see mass protests against the mission (which is really about building schools and a humanitarian, friendly government). No, we can't change people quickly, but it makes it difficult convincing others that you are doing good when they see our own media rallies condemning our presence there.

TOM GEORGE, Scottsdale, Arizona

(Read more on Tom George's lessons from Bosnia at www.nea.org/ref?Bosnia.)

'This is discrimination.'

My biggest problem coming out of the military wasn't readjusting to civilian life, it was getting what I deserved from the New York State pension system. When I applied to teach in New York, I was told I could get credit for the time I served in the Army during the Korean War. But when I tried to get that credit, I found out it was only for people who left New York teaching jobs to go into the military. I was teaching in Florida when I was drafted, so I was out of luck. This is discrimination. I don't know how many states have such policies. I'd like to hear from other vets who had similar problems.

BOB HEATH, Ormond Beach, Florida (heathshome@aol.com)

Send comments on these stories to ajehlen@nea.org.

THE *sm*ART Gallery

(**S**tudent **M**asterpiece **ART** Gallery)

Thanks to the over 1,100 contestants in NEA's National Kids' Art Contest for reminding us that what's cool about school is you! And congratulations to the winners whose vivid images of their favorite teachers and vision for the school of the future blew us away. Something to smile about: My Favorite Teacher was a favorite theme not just with the little kids, but with high schoolers, too.

Best of

TITLE: School o
WINNER: *Jessie Z*
TEACHER: Heather
San Jose

First Place, Grades 7-9

TITLE: Music Within Us
WINNER: *Jared Como*, age 15
TEACHER: Darryl Gates, Youree Drive Middle, Shreveport, Louisiana

f Show

f the Future
hao, age 7
Aldama, Dilworth Elementary,
, California

First Place, Grades K-3

TITLE: What's Cool About School
WINNER: *Jorsely Ramirez*, age 5
TEACHER: Dan Suh, Charles H. Kim Elementary, Los Angeles, California

First Place, Grades 10-12

TITLE: Barnsie
WINNER: *Oleksandra Barysheva*, age 16
TEACHER: Barbara Barnes, Matawan Regional High, Aberdeen, New Jersey

First Place, Grades 4-6

TITLE: What's Cool About School
WINNER: *Sonnie Kpadehyea*, age 10
TEACHER: Ruth Gainer, Whetstone Elementary, Gaithersburg, Maryland

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DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS?
Kids use acronyms or web slang to communicate online and in text messages.
SAFE AND QUICK RIGHT? Most of the time it is, but Sprint Nextel has partnered with the NEA Health Information Network and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children to help you identify those potential risks and promote online safety for kids. Through the 4NetSafety program, we provide resources and materials for educators, parents,guardians and kids. Visit us online at sprint.com/projectconnect to learn more.
ANSWER: LMIRL means "let's meet in real life"
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Teachers report to prisons and juvenile detention centers every day in the hope of improving the lives of their student-inmates, some of whom will never again live outside prison walls.

Prison Drama

BY JOHN ROSALES

NANCY AHLQUIST never crosses the yellow line painted an inch wide on the concrete floor of her classroom.

On one side is her whiteboard, desk, chair, and supply cart. On the other are her students—adult male convicts who have committed crimes ranging from kidnapping and armed robbery to rape and murder. Some are serving life sentences without parole. Others are on death row. All are felony criminals at the Ohio State Penitentiary (OSP), a maximum security prison in Youngstown.

Most of the 530 inmates at OSP can't add or spell very well and read at a seventh-grade level. Yet there are eager learners among them who will spend years striving to earn a GED.

Inmates are escorted by a guard from their cells to class, one at a time. Some are in handcuffs and shackles, which are removed only after they enter the 4-by-4-foot cells with prominent locks, desktops welded to the bars, and low stools bolted to the floor.

It's surprising to find the affable Ahlquist teaching math and reading to grim-faced convicts. "I'm rewarded when they learn from me, just like any teacher," she says. But educators in this environment need "life experience and maturity under their belts," Ahlquist cautions. "I wouldn't recommend this job to a teacher fresh out of college."

Another key to survival is not asking about the crimes that

PHOTO: TIM HARRISON

inmates have committed. A guard once let slip to Ahlquist that a new student was the person who had recently raped a 5-year-old girl and thrown her body out of a third-story window.

"I had to go to class and work with this person in five minutes," she says. "I'd rather not know what they've done."

About 15,000 correctional educators serve the country's prisons and juvenile detention centers. Many started their careers in public schools. For Ahlquist, finding a full-time position in Youngstown schools was impossible following the decline of the area's steel industry in the 1980s. She got by on substitute teaching for 10 years.

Longing for job security, in 1997 she took a position at the Northeast Ohio Correctional Center and later switched to OSP because it offered a solid family medical plan and union protection through the Ohio Education Association (OEA) and the State Council of Professional Educators (SCOPE).

Before reporting to work at a state prison, teachers attend the Ohio Corrections Training Academy. There, they learn about criminal behavior and go through the same physical training in unarmed self-defense as prison guards. "I know how to take a punch," Ahlquist says. "But I wouldn't want to." One Ohio teacher is currently recovering from reconstructive facial surgery after being punched by an inmate.

When she first arrived at OSP, Ahlquist had to figure out how education fit into her students' lives. "Most have low self-esteem," she says. "They have always failed and have a negative perception of school."

All incoming inmates are enrolled in an education program if they don't have a high school diploma or GED. Even those sentenced to life without parole or death row sometimes work toward a GED, often to show restitution and be better role models for their children and grandchildren, Ahlquist says.

In addition to GED lessons, the system provides inmates with adult literacy education, apprenticeship training, library services, special education, vocational education, and other programs. Some inmates even pay for college correspondence courses, says Ahlquist, who monitors the exams of those pursuing college degrees.

But most inmates are playing catch-up when it comes to school. In Ohio, approximately 30 percent of incarcerated males and 20 percent of females read at less than a sixth-grade level and are considered functionally illiterate. Nationally, about 80 percent of prison inmates are high school dropouts.

Whether teaching or learning, studying can be a challenge with controlled locks clanging open and shut, electric gates whirring, alarms blaring—all echoing through the corridors. The harsh fluorescent lighting makes such a glare that inmates have trouble seeing the whiteboard.

"In spite of this environment, my students are learning," says Ahlquist, who speaks in an earnest, deliberate tone and likes to open her classes with a hearty, "good morning, gentlemen."

Nancy Ahlquist stands in one of her classroom areas at the Ohio State Penitentiary, a maximum security prison that offers GEDs to death row inmates. Below, teacher **Stephanie Rippy** pauses between classes at the Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility.

While the prisoner recidivism rate is 60 percent in Ohio and most states, Ahlquist says this figure could be reduced through more prison education programs.

"The more educated they are, the less likely they will return to prison," she says. "There is a direct correlation."

Not all Ohio inmates are adults. At the Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility, Stephanie Rippy is explaining *Romeo and Juliet* to her 10 male students. None seem overly interested in Shakespeare's tragic story. When Rippy calls on one student to read from his text, he says he has a headache and doesn't "feel like it." Another student volunteers.

"They arrive here at different levels, usually very low," says Rippy, one of 28 teachers at the all-male detention center, located in a Cleveland suburb. "Some kids who come here are illiterate." The students perform below grade level, she says, simply "because they didn't go to school. They have the intelligence but not the discipline."

Gracious and even-tempered, Rippy has worked with all types of students during her 20 years at Cuyahoga. She started there as a teacher's aide while earning her certification credential doing field work at local junior high and high schools. After experiencing large classes, disrespectful students, and the overall frenzy of Cleveland public schools, she decided to stick with correctional education, with her average class size of 16 students and single-sex environment.

The state's eight juvenile facilities operate year-round schools that employ more than 200 teachers, education support professionals, and administrators. Almost half of the teaching staff have a master's degree, including Rippy. All Cuyahoga inmates are enrolled at Luther E. Ball High School, a fully accredited school located inside the facility. It is part of a school district offering a core curriculum, electives, student assessment and testing, guidance, and library services. Special education and supplemental intervention services are also provided, all to help prepare students for the Ohio Graduation Test or the GED.

PHOTOS: TIM HARRISON

While some students return home to graduate, others opt to take the GED while incarcerated; Cuyahoga awards about 360 GEDs each year.

Unlike Ahlquist, who may work with an inmate over a period of years, Rippy's student body is in constant transition. Cuyahoga houses roughly 385 offenders—serving time for drugs, stealing, vehicular homicide, and sex-related offenses—and the average stay is just seven months.

Rippy, Ahlquist, and other correctional educators share a common goal in the education of adult and juvenile inmates: to instill a value for education where none exists. "I try to get them to see that education is a personal thing," says Rippy. "Once obtained, no one can take it away."

The U.S. correctional education system, supported by local, state, and federal funds, has no school boards, local bargaining contracts, or regular school calendar. But like typical public schools, there are work schedules, pay scales, superintendents, and a statewide bargaining contract.

Ahlquist works year-round—11 weeks on, two weeks off. Her salary is comparable to what other public school teachers earn in Ohio. And like all educators, her job comes with tedious paperwork, administrative chores, and workplace issues to discuss with managers.

Her workweek begins at 8 a.m. on Mondays with a two-hour GED course. She often opens with a motivational reading and is careful to ask open-ended questions. "I encourage critical thinking and active listening," she says. "It promotes maturity and might even contribute to an increase in self-control."

Since there are no grades, report cards, or time limit on how long it takes students to complete the GED program, student success often depends on self-discipline. It can take years for an incarcerated student to pass the GED. Inmates are not allowed access to computers, cell phones, or CD players. In their cells, some are permitted a limited number of books, paper, and golf pencils—pencils with erasers are too easily turned into weapons.

Student progress is marked through testing and evaluation. The main stumbling block, says Ahlquist, is absenteeism. "They're always doing legal research to get their cases dismissed, though I don't know of any that have ever succeeded," she says.

A few days each week, Ahlquist teaches in different classrooms, where there are no yellow bands dividing teacher from inmate. Only nonviolent inmates who've shown exemplary behavior—usually those not affiliated with one of the prison's established gangs, such as the Aryan Brotherhood, Crips, or Bloods—are allowed to attend these classes.

On Tuesdays, Ahlquist works in the computer room to teach soon-to-be-released prisoners programming and Web page design.

She teaches another group lessons from the Employment Readiness Program, which covers job interviewing, résumé writing, personal goal-setting, and self-management skills. Inmates who've served up to 30 years prepare with Ahlquist for their release from prison.

"If they don't help these people to be productive when they get out, they'll be right back," she says.

In June, 25 of these inmates were awarded GEDs in a cap and gown commencement complete with guests and cake. In a separate ceremony, 10 maximum-security inmates received their GEDs, though they were not allowed guests. In total, 65 GEDs were awarded during the 2006-07 school year.

Recently, Ahlquist ran into a former prisoner, who greeted her with open arms and an ear-to-ear smile. She had helped him get his GED several years earlier. He was now married, working for a tile company, and thinking about buying a house.

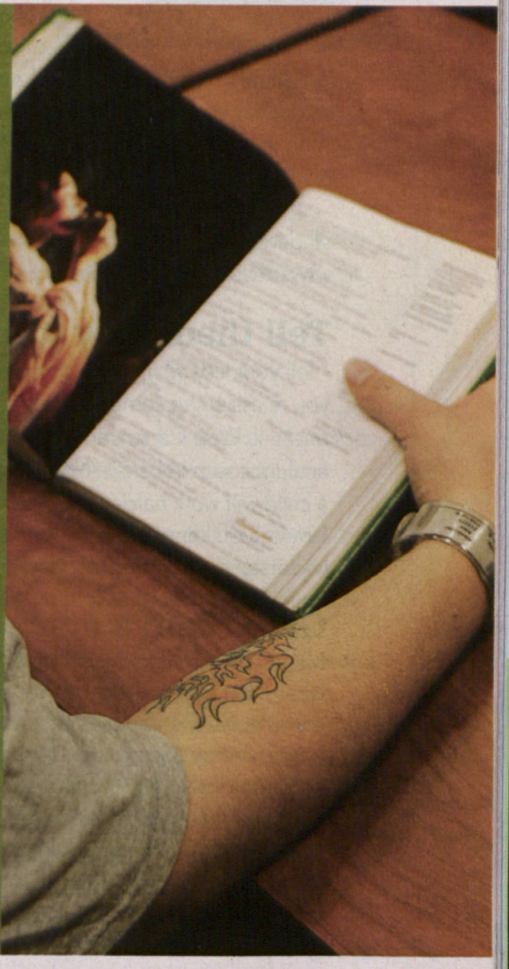
"When he introduced me to his wife and kids, he said, 'Without Mrs. Ahlquist I could never have done what I've done,'" Ahlquist says. "That's why I teach at a prison." nea

Send comments on this story to jrosales@nea.org.

SCOPE AND CEA

NANCY AHLQUIST is a site representative for Ohio's State Council of Professional Educators (SCOPE), whose 725 members also belong to OEA and NEA. SCOPE is the bargaining unit that represents non-exempt state employees from 11 agencies involved in education and library services. The majority are teachers. Ahlquist's Ohio State Penitentiary local includes three teachers, a counselor, job coordinator, and librarian. SCOPE receives legal services, group benefits, and collective organizational strength from OEA and NEA.

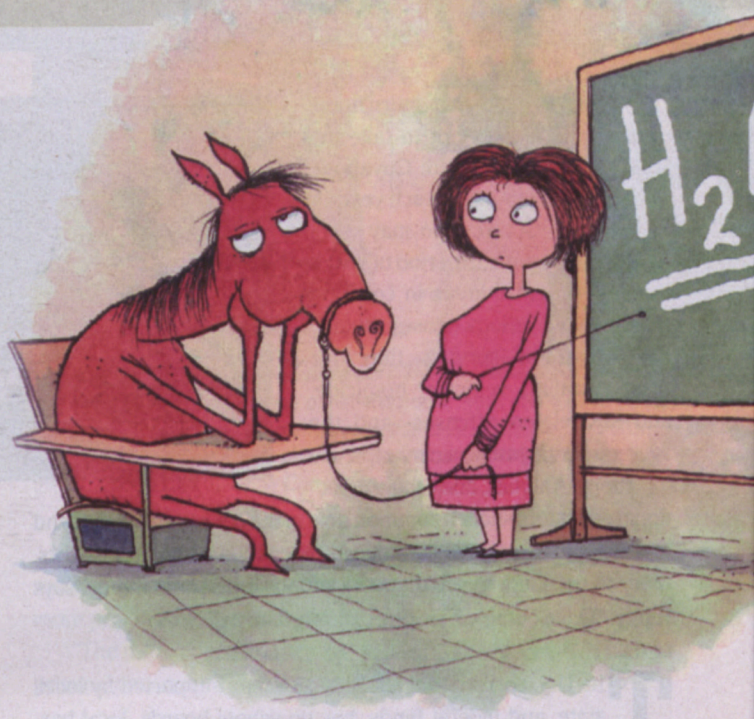
The Correctional Education Association, an affiliate of the American Correctional Association, is a non-profit serving educators and administrators who work in correctional settings. Founded in 1945, it has about 3,000 members. Though not affiliated with NEA, many correctional educators belong to both organizations.



HOW TO MOTIVATE YOUR KIDS TO LEARN

You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink.

BY ALAIN JEHLEN



That dilemma has had teachers tearing their hair out since time immemorial. How can you get students to want to learn? Some students arrive at your door already eager, but what about the others?

Hundreds of strategies have been tried and there's no consensus on the right path. But here are seven approaches recommended by accomplished teachers that you can try.

Build strong relationships.

"Let kids know you genuinely care about them, that it's not just a job that finishes at 3 p.m.," says third-grade inclusion teacher Charlene Christopher of Norfolk, Virginia.

"If kids like you, they'll perform for you," says Jim McNeil in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. "Kids know you can't become too familiar with them, but let them see you as a human being."

There's no simple formula for getting your relationship with students right. "I'm respectful to my students," says McNeil, "and in turn, they know that if they're disrespectful, I'll call them on it. Also, I use a lot of humor—that works for me."

(Read how former high school teacher Renee Moore got her students to involve other adults in their education at www.nea.org/ref?motivate1.)

Tell them why it matters.

"Tell your kids why you're doing what you're doing, especially if you're assigning something repetitious and tedious." says Michelle Wise Capen, an elementary teacher who's now a curriculum coach in Lenoir, North Carolina. "Even in kindergarten—a child will work harder at his handwriting if you sit down and tell him he's building up his finger muscle strength. Make sure they understand you're not just bossing them around."

Give them a voice and a choice.

Many schools suffer from curricula that prescribe in great detail what must be covered, but you usually can let students make some decisions about what and how they learn. They'll work harder if they have a say. Oklahoma English teacher Kevin McDonald was teaching *Othello* to his AP students and his lower level class insisted on reading it. So he scrapped his plans for them. The language was tough, but "it's about jealousy, revenge, cultural bias. These White kids from rural Oklahoma could identify with a Black Muslim from Italy who gets tricked."

Make it fun.

That's not just for elementary school. In Pennsylvania, Jim McNeil had his seventh-grade students write their own obituaries. They could marry anyone they chose—many picked celebrities—but the exercise also got them thinking about where they had been and where they planned to go.

Make it relevant.

Los Angeles fifth-grade teacher Sharon Harrison takes her students to the grocery store to see decimals in action.

The better you know each student, the better you can apply this strategy. Every September, Harrison surveys her students about their interests. Whenever possible, she writes those interests into her lesson plans, which can be as simple as using them in arithmetic word problems.

Make it real.

Plan lessons so that students accomplish something that matters to them. The National Writing Project, through which thousands of English teachers have improved their practice, recommends writing for real audiences, such as newspaper editors, parents, or public officials. History classes can build an exhibit on their neighborhood's history at a local community center. Elementary school children can "publish" their own stories, complete with artwork, and read them to kindergarten students. In Phoenix, Arizona, Allan Cameron has led mostly low-income, immigrant high school students in national robot competitions. Many kids have gone on to college and good careers. "[The robot competition] is a real task, not a worksheet," says Cameron. "We're counting on them. If someone puts the wheels on wrong, we all lose."

nea.org

VISIT WWW.NEA.ORG/REF?MOTIVATE FOR MORE APPROACHES AND IDEAS FOR HIGH-TECH TOOLS TO MOTIVATE YOUR STUDENTS.

HORSE/TEACHER ART: DAVID CLARK; PHOTO: WAYNE HANSEN

Use technology.

Renee Moore, who taught high school English in the Mississippi Delta, one of the poorest places in the country, says many students didn't want their friends to know they were interested in school. But online, they were free of the peer pressure. In 1994, she hooked up her class with a school in Soweto, South Africa. They discussed two novels, one South African and one American. "I had boys who wouldn't let you know they had read a novel unless you pulled a shotgun on them and demanded an answer," says Moore, "but they were excited about their correspondence with the Soweto kids. They would show it to me privately."

These days, it's easier to use the Internet to get your students' creative juices flowing. Moore recommends a free, online conference coming up next month. Visit www.k12onlineconference.org.

PROBLEM-SOLVER

I teach writing to low-income, minority students. Many of them come to me not liking school and convinced they can't do the work. What can I do?

An answer:

FIRST STEP: Show that you respect these students and their work by getting them to write about subjects that matter to them. Encourage them to develop what they say. Don't pick up your red pencil!

SECOND STEP: Once they're involved in telling their stories and ideas, get them to correct their own English mechanics, one rule at a time. You explain the rules, but they find and fix the mistakes.

LINDA CHRISTENSEN
Portland, Oregon

(Read Christensen's step-by-step description of how she worked with one student at **www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/18_01/corr181.shtml.**).

What's your advice?

Share it with your colleagues at www.nea.org/ref?motivateadvice

No more pizza

No rewards.

No pizza parties, no gold stars, no free passes on homework.

Rewards motivate students to get rewards, not to learn.

On the contrary, when you reward students for learning, you're telling them learning is not worth doing for its own sake. Our message to children should be that the reward for reading a great book is a story that inspires or moves them, not coupons to Pizza Hut. Otherwise, when the coupons stop, so will the reading.

Studies show that when people are rewarded for doing something, they'll do it now, but they are less likely to do it again later.

Certainly not everything worth learning is fun and exciting. I don't remember being thrilled learning my times tables, but man, am I glad I did. But I believe every teacher should be able to answer their students' question, "Of what value is this to my life?" with an answer more meaningful and profound than "It's on the exam!"

John Perricone

Nothing is more contagious than a teacher's enthusiasm for what he or she teaches. I have met teachers who could have made a lesson on doorknobs interesting because they found the subject so fascinating.

When I'm planning a lesson, I ask myself, "If I were a student listening to this, would I find it interesting and meaningful?" If the answer is "no," I start over until the answer is "yes." To date (knock on a desk), I haven't had to hand out one Tootsie Pop.

JOHN PERRICONE
High school health educator, Endwell, New York

(Perricone is the author of *Zen and the Art of Public School Teaching*. Read his *NEA Today* essay at **www.nea.org/ref?motivate2** and visit his Web site at **www.JohnPerricone.com**.)

I disagree 100 percent.

If a student scores high on a test, I may buy him or her a pack of cookies, which costs me a dollar. On the final exam, I offer $5 for every top level score. That excites students.

For ninth- and tenth-graders, I put stars on the wall with their names on them if they do well. For older students, I may give double credit for high scores. They care about their GPA, but the younger students want immediate gratification.

I don't reward students every time they do anything. Altogether, I probably spend $100 a year. But rewarding them for doing a great job—that's what industry does; it's the way the world works. Maybe if I were in an upper-middle class area, the reward would be to make a presentation to the faculty. But in my high-poverty area, money works. But it's not mostly the dollars. It's the fact that I would take my money and invest in them—that's not what they're used to.

MARY WARD
Business skills teacher, East Halifax, North Carolina

Send comments on this section to ajehlen@nea.org.

bulletin board

BEST BOARDS

The Year in Pictures

Have you ever been stumped for bulletin board ideas? Get ahead of the curve by planning out the year now. Every month my bulletin boards have a different theme the kids and I work on together.

KATHY ANN BAUS
Computer lab ESP,
Grades K–4
Cheltenham Township,
Pennsylvania

SEPTEMBER—"What I did on my summer vacation" board, with postcards from the kids.

OCTOBER—All the kids contribute Halloween-related jokes and riddles.

NOVEMBER—The fourth-graders share what they are thankful for.

DECEMBER—The second-graders make snowflakes for my "Snowmen fall from the sky unassembled" board.

JANUARY—My third-graders make handprints describing what their Martin Luther King Jr., dreams are.

FEBRUARY—My first-graders make "My heart belongs to..." valentines.

MARCH—The kindergartners make a "March comes in like a lion and goes out like a (fill in the blank)" board. Some of their answers are absolutely priceless.

APRIL—Every grade contributes a knock-knock joke for my "If April showers bring May flowers, what do May flowers bring?" board.

MAY/JUNE—Tribute to our graduating fourth-graders with all their names.

WELCOME BACK TIPS

The Sky's the Limit

As an introductory activity, my students create their own ceiling posters with drawings, personal photos, magazine cutouts—anything that reflects who they are. After the students introduce their posters to their fellow classmates, I make a big deal out of taping the posters to the ceiling tiles in the classroom. To sweeten the pot, I take digital photos of every student and give them copies to incorporate into their posters. I also use the digital photos as screensavers for my class computer and as flashcards to help me learn their names faster.

TOM WEAVER, High school psychology and social studies teacher, Puyallup, Washington

Time Capsule

My students and I begin the year by creating time capsules out of oatmeal boxes or potato chip canisters. Each capsule contains the student's height, a handwriting sample, a math timed test (multiplication facts), some predictions (both individual and class), and resolutions. We "seal" the capsules with wrapping paper, then put them into a large, taped box that we open on the last day of school.

DEBBIE BOHN, Fifth-grade teacher, Schaumburg, Illinois

Birthday Buddies

My students get acquainted by making birthday cards. They sit in groups and create a card for the person across from them. After finding out about favorite hobbies, books, and places visited, they design an appropriate card cover (name, date of birth, and a greeting go on the inside). I keep the stack by the classroom calendar and post the birth dates, and when a birthday comes up, everyone signs the card. (We make up a half birthday for summer babies and give greeting cards to students who don't celebrate birthdays.) The kids love their cards and know they are appreciated.

SUE KAST, Fifth-grade teacher, Pleasanton, California

Getting To Know Us

On the first day of school, I walk up to a student's desk, introduce myself, shake hands, and tell the class one of my favorite activities. The student tells his or her name and an interesting personal fact. I move on to a second student but give a new statement about myself. I repeat the second student's statement, then go back and repeat the first student's name and statement. I do this until I've learned all the students' names. By the end of the first day, they know everything about their teacher, and all of us know something about each other.

CARLA HERBERT, Fourth-grade teacher, Leavenworth, Kansas

SHELL IMAGE: MEHMET FATIH KOCYILDIR; PUMPKIN: LOKE YEK MANG; TURKEY: ERIC ISSELÉE; SNOWFLAKES: BIELOUS NATALIIA; GIRL: ARIEL SKELLEY; HEART: KASH76; LION: GARETH LEUNG; FLOWERS: SABRI DENIZ KIZIL; GRADUATE: BRONWYN PHOTO; BIRTHDAY: N.L.; HOURGLASS: KARA FELLOWS

CHUCKLES

PARKING PROBLEM

Today I was explaining to my kindergartners that an airman from the local Air Force base would be coming to speak to us about his job. One little boy looked very confused and asked, "But where will he park his jet?"

BETH MALONEY
Surprise, Arizona

SCHOOLIES

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SEND IT IN

Got a great classroom bulletin board, cool project, or creative lesson?

Send photos and descriptions of your bulletin boards, class projects, and best lesson plans to: sholcomb@nea.org. Please include your name, your job, and the community and state where you work.

For a weekly e-mail of questions, answers, and practical classroom tips, join Works4Me, one of NEA's most popular and useful services. Just send the message "subscribe Works4Me" (without the quotation marks) to **Lyris@list.nea.org**.

PARENT RAP

What's your best advice for building relationships with parents?

ANSWER: Each year, "my" parents write a letter to me about their favorite subject—their child. I ask them to avoid school-related details and tell me, instead, about the child they see at home. They share personal stories about their child's dreams, fears, and passions. I've heard stories about how my babies have gotten their names, what they are afraid of, and what they excel in. I get to see the child they see, a child I may not have seen through the lens of school. I also ask parents to share their child's sports/dance/recital schedules with me, and I show up for at least one activity. I have great rapport with my parents because they trust that I care about more than their child's test scores.

LAURIE ANN LAWRENCE
Second-grade teacher
Stockbridge, Georgia

ANSWER: This is worth its weight in gold. Put all your students' names in a jar and let them pick out one a week. They get excited when you tell them you will call the chosen parents just to chat and answer questions—no bad news. Parents love it, and so do the kids.

EILEEN LARKIN
Seventh-grade language arts and reading teacher
Chalfont, Pennsylvania

ANSWER: I'm a Spanish teacher who sends postcards from Spanish-speaking countries to parents with a brief message about their child's accomplishments. I keep a stack in my desk (bought for pennies off of eBay), and some I've created with pictures of the students in class (postcard printer paper can be bought at any major office supply store).

SARA ROKICKI
Warren, Michigan

ANSWER: **1)** Use the word "families" when referring to the people with whom your students live. Many children don't live with their parents. **2)** Send a weekly newsletter. Informed families feel more connected to the classroom. **3)** When a child is having a problem, use the family as a resource. Seeking their advice shows respect and helps gain their support. **4)** Begin and end every communication with something positive about the child. Every child has strengths that are noteworthy. Note them often!

DIANE LINDSEY POSTMAN
Early childhood special ed teacher
Gloucester County, Virginia

JET IMAGE: MES4U; CARTOON: JOHN P. WOOD; POSTCARD: JUHA-PEKKA KERVINEN; CLIMBER: FRANCES A. MILLER

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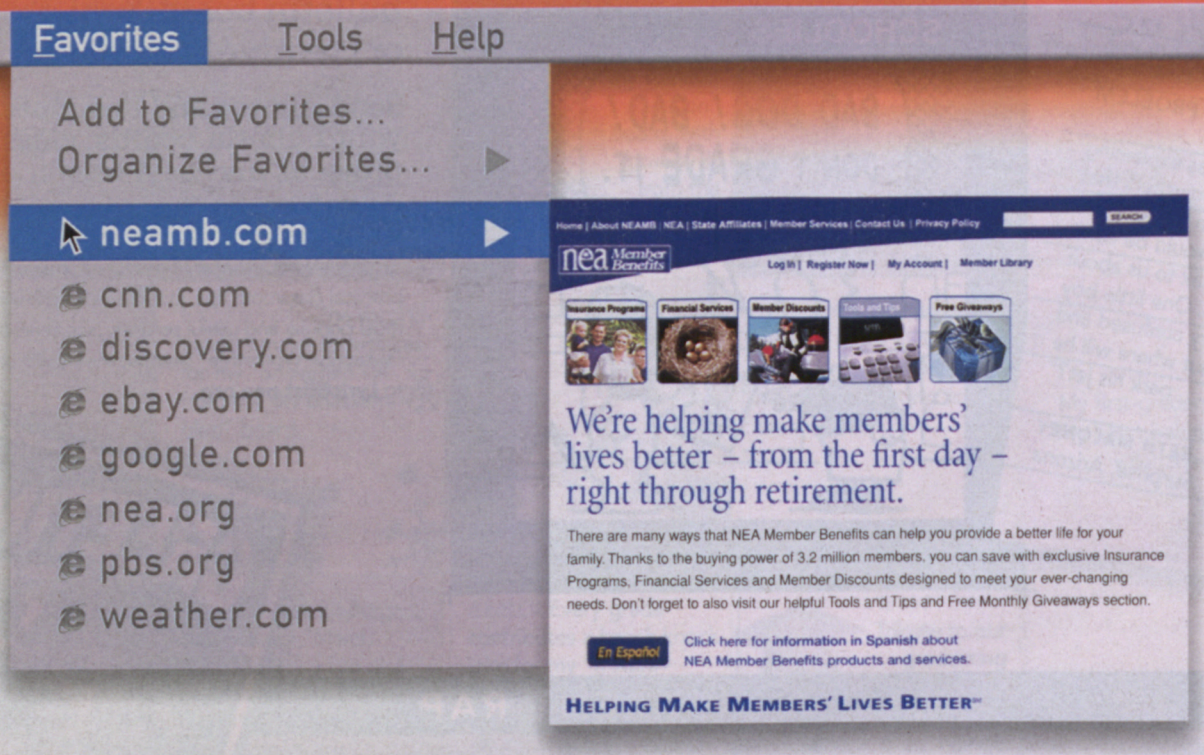
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the guide ...to healthy living

> clean living
> Web resources
> hand cleaners

OFF TO A HEALTHY START

How to keep yourself up and running throughout the year.

BY SHEREE CRUTE

Fall is a great time for fresh starts, but the change of seasons can play havoc with your health. You may blame germs for fall illnesses, but stress is the hidden culprit—a stepped-up work pace can sap your energy, zap your immune system, and leave you wondering what hit you before winter's first chill. Here's our guide to home and work strategies to have you sprinting healthfully into the school year.

Outsmart Stress

Research has shown that stress can spike your blood pressure, damage your arteries, and suppress your immune system, leaving you susceptible to all kinds of viruses. So how can you manage stress better to avoid getting sick in the first place?

ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE. Research shows that the intense emotions we associate with stress can actually help rather than harm your health if they lead to a sense of achievement and excitement. Although stress is unavoidable, it doesn't have to be negative, says Doug Wood, Ed.D., executive director for the National Academy for Excellent Teaching at Columbia University Teachers College. Some workplace stress is manageable if you adjust your point of view. So look for the positive in every situation you can. No, the pandemonium in your school cafeteria won't magically turn into a yoga session, but a philosophical shrug or grin at the foibles of adolescent behavior may just lower your blood pressure instead of raising it.

BE HOLISTIC. Exercise and a healthy diet are important, but they're not enough to ward off stress—you must also attend to mind and spirit. Maintain a support network. While many women have these in place already, men may need to identify friends and colleagues who can lend an ear when needed.

PHOTO: MEIKO ARQUILLOS

Live in the Rhythm

The circadian cycle signals your brain to wake and sleep, so stick to your body's circadian rhythm. "It's the natural way to avoid fatigue," explains Harvard Medical School research fellow Patrick Fuller.

SLEEP CONSISTENTLY. Periodic sleep marathons will just throw you further out of balance. "[G]o to bed and get up within the same 30-minute time span every day," says Fuller. "If you need an alarm to wake up, you're sleep deprived."

FOLLOW THE CLOCK. Avoid caffeine after mid-afternoon, more than two alcoholic drinks a day, or aerobic exercise an hour before bed, says Fuller. "It will just confuse your body's natural clock."

Keep Sniffles in Check

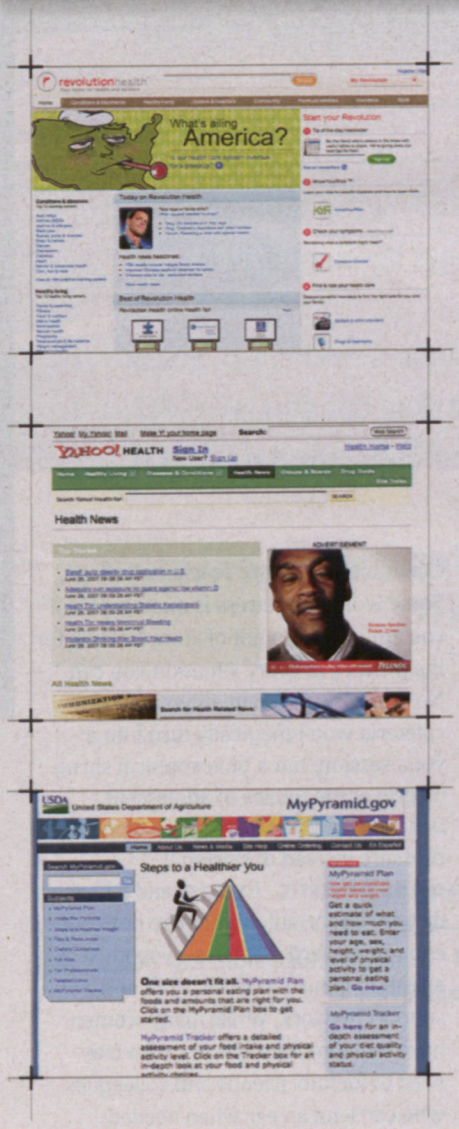
September kicks off cold and flu season, and toddler-size nasal passages are more likely to harbor cold viruses than those of older kids and adults, reports the National Institutes of Health (NIH). New research can give you the upper hand.

FIGHT FLU WITH FOOD. Flu shots are still your best defense, advises NIH, but recent research shows that selenium, a mineral in whole grains, also inhibits the flu virus. Get trace amounts from food (too much can be toxic)—try garlic or stir wheat germ into your yogurt or cereal.

COUNT DOWN COLDS. Colds are most contagious in the first three days, NIH advises, so stay home during that time and offer your students' parents the same advice.

CLEAR OUT ALLERGIES. "Fall is ragweed, tree pollen, and outdoor mold season—a nose full if you're allergy prone," says James Li, M.D., chair of the allergy division at the Mayo Clinic. His advice: Close windows and switch on a well-cleaned air conditioner or ventilation system—HEPA filters help. Remember, moist, dirty surfaces encourage molds and dust mites.

Online Health Resources



24-Hour Service

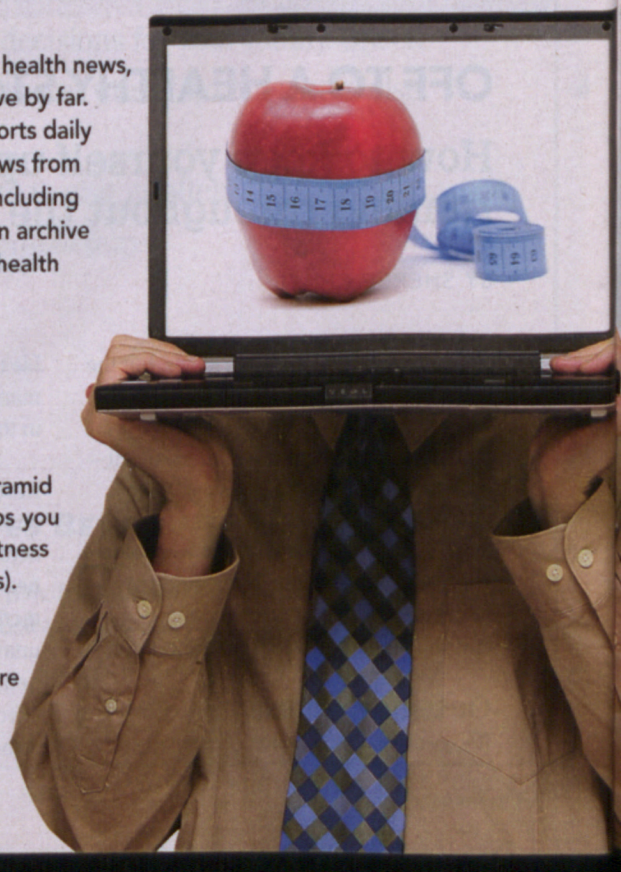
Revolutionhealth.com, the latest venture of America Online co-founder Steve Case, is a revolutionary concept in online health information and services. The free content includes disease information, doctor ratings, a symptom checker, and physician blogs where you can submit questions. Member services ($129 per year) include a 24-hour registered nurse hotline, a team to help you solve health insurance problems, and a group that contacts doctors for you to check experience and insurance acceptance.

Breaking News

Lots of sites claim to offer breaking health news, but Yahoo is the most comprehensive by far. http://health.yahoo.com/news/ reports daily national and international health news from several major news organizations, including Reuters and Healthday. It also has an archive and search engine to help you sort health stories by topic.

Personalized Health Plan

An updated version of the food pyramid concept, www.mypyramid.com helps you design a personalized eating and fitness plan (for good health or weight loss). Best of all, unlike other weight loss sites, the plan is completely free. Healthy eating guidelines for kids are available as well.

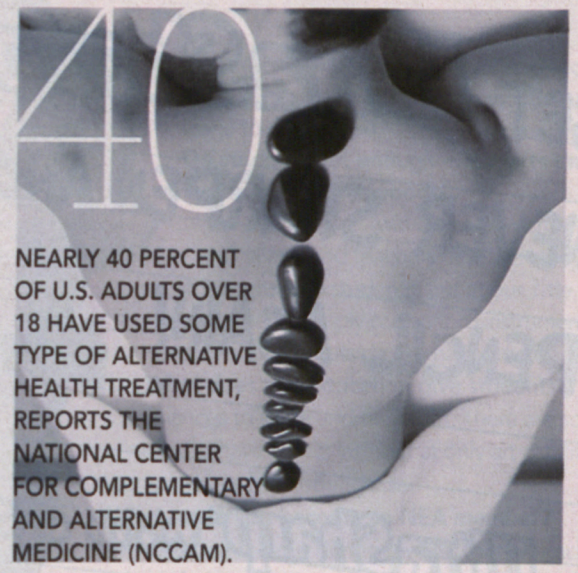


COMPUTER PHOTO: ZIMMYTWS

HOW I... Talk back to my doctor

Tips on communicating with M.D.s

When reading specialist Nancy Porter got the call that her husband had suffered a stroke, she rushed to the hospital. But she wasn't prepared to get the cold shoulder from his doctors. "They flipped through charts, refused eye contact, and ignored my questions—just acted like we could be dismissed," Porter says. She finally enlisted the help of a world-renowned stroke specialist from their hometown hospital in Iowa City, where she later transferred her husband. Her advice? 1) Don't be ignored; 2) write out a list of questions and press until they are answered; and 3) if you're still stymied, make your case to the hospital's social workers or administrators until you receive the attention you need.



NEARLY 40 PERCENT OF U.S. ADULTS OVER 18 HAVE USED SOME TYPE OF ALTERNATIVE HEALTH TREATMENT, REPORTS THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE (NCCAM).

Comparing Hand Cleansers

Washing your hands with soap and water is best say the experts—it's the friction of rubbing hands together that works. But a sink isn't always available, so what about those on-the-go hand sanitizers teachers and parents love so well? See how our product panel and your peers rated the most popular antibacterial cleansers.

	WIPES	LOTION	SPRAY	FOAM	GEL	SOAP
price	$2.29	$5.00	$1.79	$5.00	$2.19	$0.90
smell	Clean but antiseptic	Zesty grapefruit scent that lasted through next washing	Light and lemony	Way too strong, but you could tell whether your kid washed her hands or just rinsed!	Redolent of rubbing alcohol	Fresh and familiar
feel	Refreshing and wet, so it feels like you're getting your hands clean	Moisturizing power nice because typical antibacterial gels are so drying	Refreshing, but is it really getting my hands clean?	Soft and squishy, makes you want to wash your hands	Check kids' hands for cuts—the alcohol in the gel might burn!	Like it's getting the job done
ease of use	Portable, but you need a place to toss used wipes	Convenient to carry	Easy to store, but nozzle is hard to aim, and pump broke after a few sprays	Convenient if there's a water source nearby	Can take it anywhere	Gotta have a sink and towel handy
kid factor	"Smells a little bit like cleaner"	"Feels medicine-y, like it's working"	"Oooh, I like this one"	(Giggle) "Smells like sour grapes"	"Nice to know you're 'lotioning' and cleaning at the same time"	"Soap and water is the best!"

STONES PHOTO: DIGITALVISION; PRODUCTS: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.

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JAKKS Pacific™

Erik Brandt, 34

SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

English and journalism teacher
Alternative country singer in The Urban Hillbilly Quartet

What inspired you to become a musician?
Singing folk songs at YMCA Camp Manito-wish as a kid. (I still sing some of them in concert.)

Musical influences?
The Waterboys, The Jayhawks, Paul Kelly.

Last album you bought?
Kris Delmhorst's *Strange Conversation*. Absolutely beautiful. It's all famous poems turned into songs. Perfect for an English teacher.

45s or downloads?
I'm an LP or 33 guy. I still like to hold the case or envelope.

Coolest part of touring?
Getting paid to see our majestic country, Canada, Australia, and the U.K. Also, sharing stages with current and former students and helping get their music careers started.

Does your music ever intersect with your daytime gig?
Yes. I'm in our school's Academy of Fine Arts, and the band has performed for students there and at the Sadie Hawkins Dance (which was amusing for all involved). I bring artists and guest speakers from the local music scene to school, too.

Do students get enough music/arts time in your neck of the woods?
Yes and no. The Twin Cities are rich with culture and talent, and teachers here are always sharing their gifts with students. But at our Title I school, many students simply can't afford instruments, lessons, or supplies outside of what school can provide.

What does arts education give students?
Chances to shine and to dream. There are some (like me) who have a hole inside that only art can fill. It completes us like nothing else.

What made you become an NEA member?
My dad pointed out during my first year of teaching that the only organization that has historically stood up for teachers and education is the union. I signed up the next week.

Hardest thing about teaching and touring?
Finding time to sleep.

Hear some of Brandt's newest album at www.nea.org/ref?brandt

SHORT TAKES

Barbara Ellicott, 66

STANHOPE, NEW JERSEY

After Ellicott (NJEA-Retired) was injured in a 1994 pit bull attack, doctors said she wouldn't run again—a terrible blow to the former speech pathologist and Boston and New York marathon veteran.

But after "sitting like a bump on a log for half a decade," her children urged her to reignite her active lifestyle. She became a vegan and a motivational speaker, and hit the pavement again, completing a marathon last fall. She's also writing a book about holistic healing, drawing on her life and near-death experiences.

Carimenia Felecia Hampshire, 46

GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FLORIDA

Transportation Department administrative assistant
Recently elected to the City Council

What's the Hampshire campaign slogan?
"A voice for the people and a visionary for tomorrow."

Favorite political movies?
Head of State and *Fahrenheit 9/11*.

What education issue is most important to you?
Funding, specifically, the lack of it!

What can NEA members do to make their voices heard in politics or government?
Donate time and money to candidates who are education friendly, regardless of political party. [To donate to the NEA Fund, which helps elect pro-public education candidates, head to www.nea.org/ref?pac.] And get out and vote. Take your family and friends, too.

What made you become an NEA member?
Someone asked me.

Favorite song?
"A Change Is Gonna Come" by Sam Cooke.

PEOPLE POLL

What do you look forward to most about fall? Head to www.nea.org/ref?fallpoll to vote.

PHOTO TOP: JANET HOSTETTER; BOTTOM JON FLETCHER

Democracy In Action

New NEA Resolutions and Resolutions Amended at the 2007 Representative Assembly

Dates in parentheses after each resolution represent the years that the resolution was first adopted and last amended. If only one year is shown, the resolution was newly adopted at the 2007 RA. This listing does not include resolutions adopted with editorial amendments. All NEA resolutions are available online at www.nea.org.

A-3. Understanding and Support of Public Education

The National Education Association recognizes its responsibility to promote an understanding of the history and continuing importance of public education and to support public education and public education employees. The Association encourages wide community and parental participation in achieving and maintaining educational excellence. The Association believes that school boards and other stakeholders also have a responsibility to promote public understanding of the importance of public schools.

The Association also believes that the success of our nation depends upon high standards of educational excellence. The Association supports a positive school environment; excellence in teaching; high standards for success, learning, and student behavior; and extensive parental involvement. The Association also recognizes its responsibility to promote excellence in public education and supports efforts to improve it. (1969, 2007)

A-4. Parental Involvement

The National Education Association believes that a community engaged in the life of its public schools is paramount to the future of public education. The Association also believes that a strong partnership must be formed among parents/guardians, schools, the Association, and the community to address the mutual interests of the entire community.

The Association further believes that parents/guardians who are active participants in the education of their children increase the likelihood of the achievement of educational excellence. Parents/guardians, teachers, other education employees, school board members, and the community must set high expectations for student behavior and academic success and provide the encouragement and support for each student to achieve his or her full potential.

The Association believes that innovative programs should be developed and resources committed to promote and increase family and community involvement in public schools and to promote and increase the involvement of education employees in the community. The Association encourages its affiliates to work collaboratively with the community in establishing such programs and finding the resources necessary to make the programs successful.

The Association also believes that parents/guardians should be encouraged to visit their children's schools and communicate with their children's teachers and other education employees with whom the children have daily contact. In addition, schools should communicate with parents/guardians in their native language. The Association further believes that parents/guardians, students, community members, teachers, other education employees, and school board members should promote the successes of the collaboration between the school and the community. (2001, 2007)

A-13. School Accountability

The National Education Association supports effective and fair school accountability systems. The Association believes that these systems must promote high levels of student excellence that reflect meaningful, high quality learning and ensure that the best teaching practices are supported and utilized. The Association also believes that the focus of the accountability system must be on the school, not on individual stakeholders, as the unit for evaluation and improvement of student learning. Development and implementation of the accountability system must ensure that the stakeholders at the school, district, state, and national levels share the responsibility for establishing clear goals, adopting high expectations for student learning, demonstrating multiple methods of student success, and providing adequate and equitable funding and support systems.

The Association further believes that a school accountability system must—

a. Promote educational excellence
b. Ensure the alignment of standards, assessments, and curricula
c. Balance its focus on school context, process, and student performance
d. Set high standards for student learning, levels of support by each stakeholder, and clearly defined goals for the school as a unit
e. Provide for the development and implementation of a valid methodology for use as an assessment tool to determine the required funding necessary to enable all students to achieve educational excellence
f. Provide professional development for all education employees prior to implementation of the system
g. Use multiple assessment tools that are universally designed and sources of data that are meaningful, relevant, valid, and reliable
h. Include necessary accommodations and modifications to maximize the success of all students
i. Include measures to improve school accountability
j. Identify how the school as a unit achieves its goals
k. Identify the quality, quantity, and impact of support provided by each stakeholder
l. Identify and address the internal and external factors that impact student learning and development
m. Provide for the timely dissemination of assessment results to all stakeholders
n. Be applied in a fair and equitable manner
o. Include periodic evaluation and modification of the system
p. Provide for the development of a school improvement plan.

The Association believes that the school improvement process must, at a minimum—

a. Involve all school staff as active partners in the development of the plan
b. Provide the additional funding, resources, and assistance necessary to accomplish the plan
c. Identify the responsibilities of each stakeholder—students, education employees, parents/guardians, community members, government, policymakers, social agencies, and taxpayers—in the implementation of the plan
d. Provide time for planning, implementation, and reassessment
e. Be consistent with education employees' rights and responsibilities as set forth in laws, contracts, policies, and/or local agreement processes. (1971, 2007)

A-15. Federal Financial Support for Education

The National Education Association believes that the federal government has a legitimate and proper concern and responsibility for the quality of public education provided to its citizens.

The federal government should—

a. Ensure equity and adequacy of educational opportunity for all
b. Collect basic data to be used in public schools and to engage in research, development, and consultation activities that support quality state and local education programs
c. Grant supplemental aid to states that are not able to raise adequate funds to provide all students with a high-quality education and to provide funding to support state and local government efforts in pursuit of national interests in public education.

Federal funding formulas should reflect the most current and accurate accounting of the public school population; measurements of poverty; and the state's ability to raise adequate funds. The Association also believes that funding for federal programs should be substantially increased, not merely redistributed among states or other federal initiatives.

The Association further believes that there should be federal support for education whereby:

a. The federal government assumes a full partnership role with local school districts by providing significant levels of federal funding for elementary and secondary education through a program of general aid and categorical assistance along with the mandatory full funding of mandated federal programs.
b. Federal education funding is clear and identifiable within the federal budget.
c. Federally funded instructional programs have maximum teacher involvement in their development at the federal level and must be implemented at the local level only after the involvement and approval of the recognized bargaining agent or local affiliate.
d. Advisory committees for federally funded programs reflect the ethnic makeup of local communities and maintain a gender balance to ensure accountability and equity. Parents/guardians, students, and educators should be included as members of these committees.
e. The amount of aid is generally predictable for long-range planning and specifically predictable for year-to-year planning.
f. Federal legislation complies with civil rights statutes and is consistent with the constitutional provision respecting the establishment of religion and provides for judicial review as to its constitutionality.
g. Categorical funding is assured in areas such as special education, bilingual/English as a second language, and the economically/educationally disadvantaged.

The Association believes that federal monies budgeted for pre-K through adult education must be equitably and adequately expended for public education. The Association opposes any federal legislation, laws, or regulations that provide funds, goods, or services to sectarian schools. The Association also opposes providing such funds, goods, or services to nonsectarian private schools or nonpublic school students in pre-K through adult education, unless those funds, goods, or services are used for educational services that are not available in public schools to which students have reasonable access. The Association condemns and deplores federal policies and programs that serve to undermine America's historical commitment to free public education. (1983, 2007)

A-19. Public Education/National Defense

The National Education Association believes that maintenance of a strong system of public education is paramount to maintaining a strong national defense. Whenever there is a redirection of resources from military purposes, the Association supports a policy of economic conversion to facilitate the orderly redirection of such resources to alternative civilian uses, with public education being one of the highest priorities. (1985, 2007)

A-28. Local Education Foundations

The National Education Association believes that local education foundations (LEFs) can strengthen the educational objectives of a school system by supporting programs that will enhance the approved school curriculum. LEFs are nonprofit organizations whose boards represent local community and education leaders. Each LEF is unique in its operation with the purpose of generating resources for local public education programs.

The Association also believes that LEFs should be separate from the local board of education and district administration and must not supplant local budgets. The Association further believes that education employees in positions within an LEF-funded program must be a part of an existing collective bargaining unit or, in nonbargaining jurisdictions, must be subject to the existing legislation, employer policy, and/or other sources that establish the terms and conditions of employment. The Association believes that projects and programs developed by LEFs must not replace current educational programs offered by the district and must not displace members from assignments held in the district. The district must be reimbursed for the use of facilities, resources, or services at the full rate.

The Association also believes that LEFs should grant awards to education employees in a fair, equitable, and nondiscriminatory process. LEFs should establish, publish, and implement clear guidelines for granting awards.

The Association further believes that education employees included in LEF grant programs must be protected from reproach by school and/or community members. (2006, 2007)

A-31. Acceptable Charter Schools and Other Nontraditional Public School Options

The National Education Association supports innovation in public education. The Association believes that acceptable charter schools, which comply with Association criteria, and other nontraditional public school options have the potential to facilitate reforms, such as decentralized and shared decision making, diversity in educational offerings, and the removal of onerous administrative requirements. By developing new and creative methods of teaching and learning that can be replicated in mainstream public schools, these schools may be agents for positive change. The Association also believes that, when concepts such as charter schools and other nontraditional school options are proposed, affected public education employees should be directly involved in the design, implementation, and governance of these programs.

The Association further believes that plans should not negatively impact the regular public school program and must include adequate safeguards covering contract and employment provisions for all employees, voluntary participation, health and safety standards for all students and employees, nondiscrimination and equal educational opportunity, staffing by licensed education professionals, and financial responsibility.

The Association believes that programs must be adequately funded, must comply with all standards for academic assessment applicable to regular public schools, must include start-up resources, must not divert current funds from the regular public school programs, and must contain appropriate procedures for regular periodic assessment and evaluation, as well as adequate attendance and record keeping procedures.

The granting of charters should be consistent with the following principles:

a. Charter schools should serve as a laboratory for field-testing curricular and instructional innovations and/or to provide educational opportunities for students who cannot adequately be served in mainstream public schools.
b. Charter school programs must be qualitatively different from what is available in mainstream public schools and not just an avenue for parental choice.
c. Local school boards should be the only entity that can grant or renew charter applications.
d. The criteria for granting a charter should include a description of clear objectives, missions, and goals. Renewal of a charter should be contingent on the achievement of these objectives, missions, and goals.
e. Appeals of local school board decisions in charter applications should be made to a state education agency but appeals should be heard only on the grounds of arbitrary, capricious, or unreasonable decision making, not on the educational judgment of the local school board.
f. Private, for-profit entities should not be eligible to receive a charter.
g. Charter schools should have a limited right to contract with for-profit entities for services only to the extent that mainstream public schools can do so.
h. Charters should not be granted for the purpose of home schooling, including providing services over the Internet to home-schooled students.
i. Charter schools should be nonsectarian in nature.
j. Private schools should not be able to convert to charter school status. If state law allows such conversions, the chartering agency should ensure that the converted school is significantly different in student body, governance, and education program than its predecessor. This assurance should be especially vigorous in the case of schools with prior religious affiliation.
k. Charters should be granted for a limited period, with five years being the norm.
l. Charter schools should be monitored on a continuing basis and the charter should be subject to modification or revocation at any time if the children's or the public's interest is at stake.
m. Charters should not be granted unless the chartering agency is satisfied that adequate startup resources will be available.
n. Charter schools should secure insurance for liability, financial loss, and property loss. A school district should not be responsible for debts of a charter school, except for debts previously agreed upon in writing by both the district and the governing body of the charter school.
o. School boards must be authorized to deny applications that do financial harm to the authorizing school districts.

Charter schools should be designed and operated in accordance with the following principles:

a. Charter schools may have flexibility within the requirements of law dealing with curriculum, instruction, staffing, budget, internal organization, calendar, and schedule.
b. Charter schools must meet the same requirements as mainstream public schools with regard to licensure/certification and other requirements of teachers and education employees, health and safety, public records and meetings, finance and auditing, student assessment, civil rights, and labor relations.
c. Teachers and education support professionals should be considered public employees.
d. Teachers and education support professionals should have the same constitutional and statutory rights as other public employees.
e. Charter schools should be subject to the same public sector labor relations laws as mainstream public schools and charter school employees should have the same collective bargaining rights under law and local practice as their counterparts in mainstream public schools.
f. Students should not be charged tuition or required to pay a fee to attend a charter school.
g. Students should not be involuntarily assigned to attend a charter school.
h. Charter schools should have some discretion in selecting or rejecting students if they are designed to serve a targeted student population. Students shall not be screened on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation and/or gender identification, English-language proficiency, family income, athletic ability, special needs, parental involvement in school affairs, intellectual potential, academic achievement, or cost of educating the student. Indirect screening such as denying admission because of the cost of transportation of a student shall not be permitted.
i. Charter schools should meet the needs of at-risk students and those students requiring special education services.
j. Employment in a charter school should be voluntary. Employees in conversion charter schools should be afforded an opportunity to transfer to a comparable position at another mainstream public school.
k. Charter schools should not disproportionately divert resources from mainstream public schools. Charter schools should receive the same amount of money as a comparable mix of students in a mainstream public school. Adequate funds must be available for capital expenditures such as buildings and equipment that do not come from the operating budget of the charter school or the host district. (1993, 2007)

B-23. Equity for Incarcerated Persons

The National Education Association believes that incarcerated persons, regardless of gender or age, are entitled to equal access to medical and mental health services as well as educational, recreational, and rehabilitative programs within all correctional systems.

The Association also believes that when a student is incarcerated and has been identified as having a disability by standards of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or a 504 plan, the plans for the student should be implemented during the duration of the incarceration. (1990, 2007)

B-24. Alternative Programs for At-Risk and/or Students With Special Needs

The National Education Association recognizes that there must be increased development and maintenance of alternative programs to meet the needs of at-risk and/or students with special needs, pre-K through adult. The Association recommends early access to intervening services and appropriate identification and placement of these students. Teachers, related service providers, and administrators should receive necessary training in diagnostic processes and alternative methods of teaching and learning, including culturally responsive teaching practices. Appropriate training should also be provided to education support professionals. In addition, parents/guardians, school security personnel, and other school community members should be encouraged to acquire the training to effectively meet the needs of these students.

Programs should include appropriate monitoring of student progress and emphasize a broad range of approaches for addressing students' differing behavioral patterns, interests, needs, cultural backgrounds, and learning styles. These programs must be evaluated on stated objectives and standards. Teachers in these programs must have a major role in designing the objectives and evaluations and working with appropriate school and community personnel to execute these objectives and evaluations.

The Association believes that at-risk students who are assigned to an alternative placement due to discipline issues should be required to exhibit regular attendance and adequate academic and behavioral progress, in accordance with planned interventions for the student's individual needs, prior to their return to a regular educational setting.

The Association also believes that the rights of students who are protected under the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Americans with Disabilities Act must be preserved.

The Association urges its affiliates to seek adequate compensation, planning time, materials, and facilities for all education professionals involved in these programs.

The Association supports the efforts of its affiliates to negotiate and legislate for the training of teachers seeking additional certification and hiring of an increased number of teachers with education in special areas.

In higher education settings, faculty and education support professionals who are working with students with special needs should be provided with appropriate resources to accommodate these students' special requirements.

The Association encourages its state affiliates to seek legislation that would require any person offering services to remediate, correct, or ameliorate reading, speech, language, behavioral, emotional, or learning disabilities, or related problems to be licensed under regulations of each state's department of public instruction or other appropriate agency. (1977, 2007)

B-25. Gifted, Talented, and Creative Students

The National Education Association believes that there must be educational programs and services for gifted, talented, and creative students, and supports federal and state funding for the education of these students. The Association also believes that there must be well-developed criteria and guidelines for identifying and teaching these students. Such identification must be culturally sensitive and must not discriminate on any basis other than the exceptionality being identified.

The Association further believes that professional development programs in gifted and talented education must be provided for all appropriate education employees. This professional development should be culturally responsive.

The Association urges its affiliates to promote the development and implementation of such services to gifted children and support for all educators working with this special needs population. (1980, 2007)

B-26. Educational Programs for English Language Learners

The National Education Association believes that English Language Learners (ELLs) must have programs available to them that address their unique needs and that provide equal opportunity to all students, regardless of their primary language. Programs for ELL students should emphasize English proficiency while concurrently providing meaningful instruction in all other curriculum areas. In planning a comprehensive program for ELL students, age as well as academic needs must be considered.

The Association also believes that ELL students should be placed in bilingual education programs to receive instruction in their native language from qualified teachers until such time as English proficiency is achieved. If no bilingual programs are available, these students should be taught in language acquisition and development programs designed to meet their specific needs. Students should be in classes that are limited in size; methods such as weighted formulas should be used; and additional staffing, modified scheduling, and/or curriculum design to accommodate the demands of each ELL student should be provided. Students should not be enrolled in special education classes solely because of linguistic differences.

The Association further believes that model bilingual education programs in which language minority students demonstrate an increase in English language acquisition and success throughout the grade levels should be promoted and supported at the federal, state, and local levels. The Association advocates full funding of all instructional materials, resources, and programs for ELL students as well as professional development programs for education employees who work with these students. The school district or other appropriate agency should provide released time for the training of teachers who instruct ELL students.

Educators, through a bargaining or other bilateral decision-making process, must be fully involved in the development and implementation of programs serving ELL students, including the assignment of teachers and the terms and conditions of their employment. Teachers should be compensated at the teacher's hourly rate of pay for any additional time spent in training. They should also be reimbursed for the cost of tuition, textbooks, and travel incurred in such training.

The Association values bilingual and multilingual competence and supports programs that assist individuals in attaining and maintaining proficiency in their native language before and after they acquire proficiency in English. (1981, 2007)

B-28. Education for All Students with Disabilities

The National Education Association supports a free, appropriate public education for all students with disabilities in a least restrictive environment, which is determined by maximum teacher and parent/guardian involvement. There must be a full continuum of placement options and services/delivery models available to students with disabilities. In order to implement federal special education legislation effectively, the Association recognizes that—

a. A fully accessible educational environment, using appropriate instructional materials, support services, and pupil personnel services, must match the learning needs of both students with and students without disabilities.
b. Student placement must be based on individual needs rather than on available space, funding, or local philosophy of a school district. Student placements must be examined on a regular basis to ensure appropriateness whereby all needed services and support will be provided and should not be made disproportionately by ethnicity or gender. Necessary building/staff modifications must be provided to facilitate such placement.
c. General and special education teachers, pupil personnel and related service providers, and education support professionals who work with the student, and administrators, parents/guardians, and the student, as appropriate, should have input in the development of the individualized education program (IEP) and must have access to the IEP.
d. General and special education teachers; pupil personnel and related service providers; education support professionals; and administrators, parents/guardians, and students, as appropriate, must share in implementing the IEP. Prior to implementation, all necessary educational materials, professional development, and supportive services must be provided.
e. Students with physical disabilities and/or medical needs requiring nursing procedures must have their medical needs met by certified/professional school nurses.
f. All impacted staff members must have an appeal procedure regarding the implementation of the IEP, especially in terms of student placement. The procedure must include the right to have the dissenting opinion recorded and attached to the IEP.
g. Suspension and expulsion policies and practices used by local education agencies must be applied consistently to both students with and students without disabilities where misconduct is shown to be unrelated to either the disabling condition or to improper placement.
h. A plan recognizing individual differences must be used in a systematic evaluation and reporting of program development.
i. Limitations must be made in class size, case loads, and/or work load of teachers, nurses, speech and language specialists, and other designated instructional service specialists, using methods such as weighted formulas, modified scheduling, and/or curriculum design to accommodate the demands of each IEP.
j. All teachers who serve students with disabilities must have scheduled access to resource personnel, instructional assistants, paraprofessionals, co-teachers, and special education teachers.
k. The student's IEP should not be used as criteria for the evaluation of education employees.
l. Communications must be maintained among all involved parties.
m. Staff must not be reduced.
n. All school personnel, including substitutes, must be adequately prepared for their roles, including addressing the identified individual needs of students, through appropriate licensing and/or ongoing professional development.
o. Incentives for participation in professional development activities should, as mandated by law, be made available for education employees.
p. Education employees, as mandated by law, must be appointed to local and state advisory bodies on special education.
q. Education employees must be allowed to take part in the U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services on-site visits to states. Education employees should be invited to these meetings.
r. Local affiliates and education employees must be recruited, trained, and involved in monitoring school system compliance with federal special education legislation.
s. Adequate released time or funded additional time must be made available so that teachers can carry out the increased demands placed upon them by federal special education legislation.
t. Collective bargaining and other means should be used to minimize the potentially severe impact on staff that results from the implementation of special education legislation.
u. Benefits for staff working with students with disabilities must be negotiated through collective bargaining agreements and must be honored.
v. Full funding must be provided by local, state, and federal governments.
w. Students are better served if the person working with them is prepared to deal with their needs. Substitute employees should be made aware that the assignment offered is a special needs program. (1978, 2007)

B-41. Fine Arts Education

The National Education Association believes that artistic expression is basic to an individual's intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional development. The Association also believes that fine arts transcend cultural barriers, foster multicultural understanding, and enhance critical thinking skills. The Association therefore believes that pre-K through adult education curricula must include a balanced, comprehensive, and sequential program of fine arts instruction for all students taught by a licensed specialist in a facility or room designed and equipped for that purpose. Resources must be provided to maintain and upgrade materials and provide for emerging technologies.

The Association urges its state affiliates to become involved in the promotion, expansion, and implementation of an academic fine arts program in curricula. (1980, 2007)

B-49. Lifesaving Techniques

The National Education Association believes that education employees and students should be trained in basic emergency lifesaving techniques. Such training should be included in both school curriculum and staff development. The Association also believes that education employees should be provided the opportunity for training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the proper use of defibrillators by licensed/trained personnel. (1982, 2007)

B-60. Conflict Resolution Education

The National Education Association supports the adoption and use, at all educational levels, of proven conflict resolution strategies, materials, and activities by school districts, education employees, students, parents/guardians, and school security personnel as well as the school community to encourage nonviolent resolution of interpersonal and societal conflicts.

The Association recognizes the importance of students having the appropriate social skills necessary to participate in a democratic society. Programs that teach the

skills of positive social interaction should be incorporated into academic programming. (1986, 2007)

B-61. Standards for Student Learning

The National Education Association believes in high standards that describe clear expectations for what students should know and be able to achieve. Throughout the implementation of content and performance standards, all students must be provided the instructional opportunities and learning conditions necessary to attain the standards. The Association supports the development and use of a variety of assessments that are appropriate to the standards. The Association also believes that there should be no financial incentives or consequences linked to the development, adoption, or implementation of national standards.

The Association further believes that state and local affiliates must participate in the planning, development, implementation, and refinement of standards, conditions, and assessments to ensure that—

a. Students, parents/guardians, education employees, community members, and governmental officials are involved and share the accountability.
b. Education employees are afforded released time and/or compensation in order to have opportunities to work with colleagues on a regular basis throughout the school year on how to teach and assess student proficiency in the standards.
c. Full funding and resources are provided.
d. Curriculum includes, but is not limited to, required standards. Standards are introduced into the curriculum at a rate that allows education employees opportunities to adapt their practice, work with each other, and pilot the work in a concerted fashion.
e. Appropriate attention is given to each student's progress toward attaining the standards and to his or her needs and developmental level.
f. Age-appropriate placement, when used, includes appropriate interventions and supports designed to enhance skills in order to achieve grade level.
g. Professional development is provided for all education employees to help align their practices to the standards.
h. Education employees participate in the review and refinement of standards and assessments.
i. Achievement gaps are eliminated. (1997, 2007)

B-63. Standardized Testing of Students

The National Education Association believes that standardized tests and/or assessments should be used only to improve the quality of education and instruction for students. Standardized tests, whether norm-, criterion-, or standards-referenced, can validly assess only a limited range of student learning. Therefore, they should be only an adjunct or supplement to information obtained through school- and classroom-based assessment conducted by teachers for purposes of supporting and strengthening instruction as well as for summarizing and evaluating student learning. Standardized tests are most useful when designed by the educational professionals closest to the classroom and integrated with assessment information specific to local programs. Affiliates should advocate for, and states and test designers should employ, a variety of developmentally appropriate assessment techniques that allow for universal design, necessary accommodations, modifications, and exemptions and are bias-free, reliable, and valid. When a test and/or assessment is mandated at the local, state, or national level, it should be reviewed by a panel of appropriate subject area specialists and teachers to ascertain the relevance of the test to the subject area and be used only to evaluate a program's effectiveness toward meeting local, state, or national standards and/or goals.

The Association also believes that, in order for standardized achievement tests and/or assessments to support quality education—

a. Standards must be prioritized to support effective curriculum, instruction, professional development, and assessment.
b. Stakeholders must determine high-priority standards. These standards must be clearly and thoroughly described so that the knowledge and skills students need to demonstrate are evident.
c. Valid results of assessment of high-priority standards must be reported standard-by-standard for each student, school, and district.
d. The breadth of the curriculum must be monitored to ensure that attention is given to all standards and subject areas, including those that are not assessed.
e. Progress should be continually monitored to ensure that assessments are appropriate for the purposes for which they are intended.
f. Students with special needs and/or limited English proficiency should have appropriate alternative options to standardized testing to measure individual progress and proficiencies.

The Association opposes the use of standardized tests and/or assessments when—

a. Used as the criterion for the reduction or withholding of any educational funding
b. Results are used to compare students, teachers, programs, schools, communities, and states
c. Used as a single criterion for high-stakes decision making, such as graduation requirements or grade promotion
d. The results lead to sanctions or other punitive actions
e. Arbitrary standards are required
f. They do not match the motor skills and/or academic developmental levels or language proficiency of the student
g. Student scores are used to evaluate teachers or to determine compensation or employment status
h. Programs are specifically designed to teach to the test
i. Testing programs or tests limit or supplant instructional time
j. Every student is required to be tested every year
k. Students and parents/guardians are not provided with a complete report of the individual student's test results
l. Time required to administer the test exceeds reasonable and appropriate limits for the age of the student
m. Test preparation impedes or discourages learning, constrains the curriculum in ways that threaten the quality of teaching and learning for students, or limits and/or curtails future educational opportunities of learners
n. Scores are used to track students
o. Students with special needs or limited English proficiency are required to take the same tests as regular education students without modifications and/or accommodations.

The administration of a standardized test and/or assessment includes the responsibility to educate the stakeholders about the purpose of the test, the meaning of the test results, and the accurate interpretation of its conclusions. The Association further believes that students, parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, schools, and school districts should not be penalized for parents/guardians exercising their legal rights to exempt their children from standardized tests and/or assessments. The Association believes that states should be encouraged to make test items public after they are no longer used. (1978, 2007)

C-23. Comprehensive School Health, Social, and Psychological Programs and Services

The National Education Association believes that every child should have direct and confidential access to comprehensive health, social, and psychological programs and services. Such programs and services must be interactive and coordinated within and between school, home, and community settings. School and community efforts must also be integrated to promote the well-being of children and youth and to build support for school and community health programs.

The Association also believes that schools should provide—

a. A healthful psychological climate and a safe physical environment
b. Food services that provide nutritious meals and that help students to select nutritionally appropriate foods.

The Association further believes that programs in the schools should provide—

a. A planned, sequential health education curriculum for pre-K through adult education that promotes sound nutrition and that includes education concerning the health risks associated with obesity and eating disorders
b. A planned, sequential health education curriculum for pre-K through adult education that integrates various health topics (such as drug abuse, the dangers of performance-enhancing dietary herbal supplements, violence, safety issues, universal precautions, and HIV education); that is taught by teachers specifically prepared to teach the subject; and that enables students to develop the essential knowledge and skills to maintain personal, family, and community health
c. A planned, sequential physical education curriculum for pre-K through adult education students
d. Worksite health promotion to improve the health status of school staff to set an example for desired student behaviors.

The Association believes that services in the schools should include—

a. Counseling programs that provide developmental guidance and broad-based interventions and referrals that promote the physical and psychological health of students
b. Services that identify, diagnose, and resolve learning disabilities
c. Health services provided by a licensed professional school nurse that promote the health of students through prevention, case finding, early intervention, and remediation of specific health problems; that provide first aid and triage of illness and injuries; and that provide health counseling
d. A nurse-to-student ratio at each site that is at least one school nurse to every 750 students in the school population with adjustments to safely accommodate students with special health needs and chronic illness
e. Comprehensive school-based, community-funded student health care clinics that provide basic health care services (which may include diagnosis and treatment) to supplement school nurses
f. If deemed appropriate by local choice, family-planning counseling and access to birth control methods with instruction in their use
g. Coordination with community agencies for support and follow-up activities.

The Association also believes that all health, social, and psychological services must be provided only by appropriately licensed and certificated professional personnel. The Association further believes that education employees, parents/guardians, students, and personnel from community agencies providing services to students must be involved in the development, implementation, and coordination of these services.

The Association urges its affiliates to support legislation to provide comprehensive care to all children and supports community, state, and national efforts to coordinate these services. (1969, 2007)

C-26. Safe and Orderly School Climates and Communities

The National Education Association believes that a safe and effective school climate is necessary for promoting educational excellence in public schools. The Association also believes that all education employees, parents/guardians, students, school governing boards, and community members and agencies must work cooperatively to establish and maintain safe and orderly school communities. Students and education employees must be safe from physical, verbal, and psychological violence, the threat thereof, and all forms of harassment. There must be procedures to prevent and eliminate all types of harassment that might occur. Plans and procedures regarding discipline and/or harassment must include due process.

The Association further believes that both schools and school districts must have written discipline plans and procedures that are fair, equitable, and consistently enforced as well as procedures for the safe and orderly conduct of school activities and events. The Association believes that school security personnel must be properly trained to interact with students exhibiting violent behavior.

The Association also believes that all school buildings should have controlled access during the school day. Schools and school districts should implement policies and procedures that monitor visitor access, such as check-in and wearing of identification badges.

The Association further believes that students must be taught strategies and skills, including conflict resolution, that develop respect, self-discipline, and self-control. Students must learn to distinguish between their own rights and responsibilities and the rights and responsibilities of others. There must be appropriate services and placement within regular education and alternative education programs and/or with state and/or community agencies for students who disrupt the learning environment or who are dangerous to other students, education employees, and themselves.

The Association believes that appropriate school behavior begins and is reinforced in the home. Parents/guardians of children who are disruptive often need support and training in order to reduce inappropriate behavior and increase student learning. Programs that provide assistance and training in child development, effective parenting skills, and strategies for dealing with disruptive students must be available for parents/guardians. Schools can be instrumental in identifying and recommending strategies that can assist parents/guardians. The Association also believes that a safe and effective school has a positive environment in which education employees, students, parents/guardians, and the community care for, communicate with, respect, understand, and trust each other. (1994, 2007)

C-27. School Emergency Plans

The National Education Association believes in the safety of all students and staff. The Association also believes that schools, school districts, and school transportation systems must have written plans that delineate procedures that include, but are not limited to, emergencies, lockdowns, evacuations, and weather-related conditions. Emergency plans for each school site must be developed by school personnel and parents/guardians in partnership with the community. The Association further believes that for these plans to be effective they must be practiced and updated on a regular and consistent basis. Plans must include stress management/counseling strategies as follow-up care for students and staff when appropriate. (2007)

C-34. Optimizing Students' Time To Learn

The National Education Association believes that time to learn is essential in promoting optimum success in the schools.

The Association also believes that—

a. Student absences from school have adverse effects on program continuity, academic success, learning, and mastery by the student. The Association urges its affiliates to work with school districts, parent groups, other appropriate community groups, and public agencies to develop programs to reduce student absences.
b. Excessive or unusual working hours are detrimental to a student's attention span, academic success, and learning. The child labor laws, as structured by the Fair Labor Standards Act, must be monitored, enforced, and strengthened by local, state, and national governing bodies. (1979, 2007)

C-36. Effect of Poverty on Children and Youth

The National Education Association believes that poverty affects a child's ability to develop necessary academic and life skills. Society must provide high quality educational opportunities for all children. The Association also believes that local, state, and federal governments must provide adequate and equitable resources and funding to support educational programs for students affected by poverty.

The Association further believes that all education professionals play a crucial role in providing high quality educational experiences. For educators to experience optimal results, social programs that alleviate poverty in our communities must accompany educational programs. (1988, 2007)

C-37. Effect of Homelessness on Children and Youth

The National Education Association believes that homelessness creates educational challenges that interfere with the ability of children and youth to access education and to progress academically. Homelessness can limit the knowledge of, and access to, services such as education, housing, jobs, health care; and other human service agencies.

The Association also believes that schools need to work collaboratively with the community; local, state, and federal agencies; and higher education to create opportunities to enhance student success.

The Association further believes that society has the responsibility to lessen the effect of homelessness by assisting children and youth to develop necessary life skills, to learn new concepts, and to function successfully in diverse settings. (2007)

D-6. Teacher Preparation Programs: Content and Evaluation

The National Education Association believes that teacher preparation programs must—

a. Involve practicing, licensed pre-K through adult education teachers in the design, implementation, evaluation, and systematic change of the program
b. Involve students preparing to teach in the evaluation and improvement of the program
c. Involve teacher educators who are licensed and practicing in their field of expertise and who also demonstrate practical knowledge of schools and classroom teaching
d. Include a policy of affirmative recruitment
e. Include tests, reports, student teaching, portfolio reviews, and other measures of performance designed to assess progress in acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for effective teaching
f. Require courses in the liberal arts, subject or grade-level specialty, reading, methodologies for the instruction of students with limited English proficiency, and professional studies that include learning theories, curriculum design, classroom management, behavior management, discipline, student assessment, school accountability, school law, and teaching techniques
g. Include instruction and field experience in the uses of appropriate technology for managing and advancing instruction
h. Include instructional content and experience that address our multicultural, multi-ethnic diversity, recognize the contributions of ethnic and other minorities, and provide techniques for teaching culturally diverse students
i. Include instructional content and experiences that address how economic and/or housing status affect a child's readiness and ability to learn and function in a school setting and that provide specific techniques for teachers who teach children of poverty
j. Involve students preparing to teach in recognizing biases and acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to assist them in creating a bias-free environment
k. Include instructional content and experience in research and information skills, group processes, shared decision making, strategic planning, the dynamics of intergroup communications, peace and conflict resolution, human growth and development, the changing role of the family, exceptional behaviors, and human relations
l. Include a variety of field experiences throughout the preparation program culminating in clinical practice
m. Include accurate instructional content on the evolution of professional teacher organizations and the advances in the areas of job contracts, salary schedules, benefit programs, and working conditions
n. Include instruction and practical experiences in the processes, strategies, realities, responsibilities, and challenges of shared decision making, problem-solving, and strategic planning
o. Include instructional content in awareness and educational programs of all special education areas recognized by federal law
p. Provide access to professional and preprofessional organizations related to the education profession and areas of certification
q. Promote involvement in an NEA Student Program local chapter that provides opportunities for community outreach, professional development, and political action
r. Be evaluated and accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)
s. Be funded at a level that ensures that NCATE accreditation is achieved and maintained. (1970, 2007)

D-20. Education Employee Evaluation

The National Education Association believes that formal performance-based evaluations must be augmented by formative evaluation components in order to assure the continuing competency of all education employees in their respective fields.

Effective evaluation procedures supported by professional development programs will enable all education employees to keep abreast of developments in their areas of specialization. Such procedures, with sufficient resources, can help ensure job competency, identify deficiencies in performance, and provide options such as counseling, training programs, a remediation plan, and opportunities to observe peers.

If following such an evaluation and after being given sufficient time, training, and opportunity for improvement, a person is then formally reevaluated and incompetence can be documented, dismissal proceedings with guaranteed due process may be instituted. Such proceedings must be implemented by administrators/evaluators who are properly trained and held accountable for appropriate and fair evaluation systems.

The Association also believes that the use of student achievement measures such as standardized test scores or grades to determine the competency, quality, or effectiveness of any professional educator is inappropriate and is not a valid measure.

The Association further believes that classroom teachers, without fear of discipline or negative evaluation, must be given the discretion to modify the pace of predetermined progress rates, dictated pacing guides, and mandated scripted lesson pacing charts.

The evaluation procedure should be cooperatively developed and maintained in conjunction with representatives selected by the local affiliate and should include—

a. Clear performance expectations that are specific to the job description
b. Regular observation of job performance with advance notice and discussion of evaluation visits and a timely consultation after each visit
c. A written evaluation report to be provided to the person being evaluated
d. Opportunity for a written response prior to the placement of the evaluation in the personnel file
e. An employee improvement plan that will not interfere with any earned pay increase or longevity credit
f. A provision for an alternative evaluator and/or an opportunity for an alternative evaluation report to ensure a fair and unbiased evaluation of the education employee
g. An unbiased appeals process with an evidentiary hearing under oath.

The Association further believes that procedures for evaluation of administrators should include evaluations by education employees who are directly supervised by them.

By participating in an evaluation process, an education employee shall not waive his or her right to due process in any subsequent contractual or legal proceeding. (1969, 2007)

E-9. Impact of Federal and State Legislative Mandates

The National Education Association believes that federal and state mandates regarding school programs should be broad, general guidelines, must be fully funded, and must not be based on student achievement. Mandated programs and requirements should be established or eliminated only in conjunction with the Association and its state and local affiliates. Mandates should be assessed at the local, state, and national levels by stakeholders, including the Association and its state and local affiliates, with particular attention to the impact on students, education employees, school programs, and finances. (1979, 2007)

E-13. Support Professionals in the Education Process

The National Education Association believes that all education employees are essential to the learning environment. The Association recognizes that education support professionals promote positive role models that enhance the education process.

The Association also believes that the retention of education support professionals must be encouraged and is vital to keeping strong and effective public schools. (1990, 2007)

F-8. Basic Contract Standards

The National Education Association believes that collective bargaining agreements between education employees, including part-time and temporary, and their employers should contain certain standard contractual concepts. The Association also believes that, in nonbargaining jurisdictions, these concepts should be incorporated into legislation, employer policy, and/or other sources that establish the terms and conditions of employment for education employees, including part-time and temporary. These concepts include—

a. A grievance procedure that terminates with final and binding arbitration
b. Just cause for any disciplinary action with guaranteed due process through final and binding arbitration and continuation of all employee rights, including full compensation and job security
c. A seniority list that is updated, published, and distributed annually
d. Layoff and recall based only on seniority as bargaining unit members, licensure/certification, and, to the extent legally permissible, affirmative action
e. Employer-paid benefits, including but not limited to comprehensive health, life, dental, vision, and income protection insurance and employee assistance programs, that fully cover bargaining unit members, domestic partners, and their families
f. Membership in the association or the payment of a fair-share fee as a condition of employment
g. Required posting of all vacant or newly created positions along with the right of bargaining unit members to apply for these positions
h. Unassigned preparation, planning, and travel time as applicable for all members of the bargaining unit
i. Specified class size, teaching load, and job description
j. A duty-free lunch period of not less than 30 minutes for all members of the bargaining unit
k. Nondiscriminatory, fair, and equitable treatment of bargaining unit members
l. Contractually defined procedures for evaluation and promotion
m. Released time for association business with full pay and benefits
n. Parental/child rearing leave for employees to provide care for natural or adopted children
o. Contractually defined procedures for ensuring education employee decision making in curriculum design and related instructional management and reporting systems
p. Time during the regular work day and work year for education employees to plan, to engage in professional development, to work on curriculum and assessment, to mentor and be mentored, and to provide professional leadership
q. Salary schedules that are equitable, regardless of the age level of the students being taught, and are based upon preparation, professional growth, and length of service, and that exclude any form of merit pay except in institutions of higher education where it has been bargained
r. Placement and advancement on the salary schedule based on qualifications and number of years of experience in the profession
s. Extracurricular and extra-duty assignments filled on a voluntary basis and compensated at no less than the employee's regular rate of pay
t. Protection from being required to participate in community service
u. Retirement benefits based on all income derived from school employment
v. Clearly defined bargaining unit membership
w. A guaranteed safe and healthy working environment, including a secured/lockable storage space for personal belongings
x. The school calendar
y. Protection from unilateral changes in terms or conditions of employment
z. Provisions to define class loads, student contact hours, and contract hours for instructors who are involved in distance education, and to guarantee that technology and distance education are used to supplement, not supplant, employees. (1989, 2007)

F-10. Minimum Criteria for Additional Compensation Beyond the Single Salary Schedule

The National Education Association is opposed to the use of merit pay or performance pay compensation systems. The Association believes that any system that provides additional compensation to education employees beyond that provided by the single salary schedule should meet the following minimum criteria:

a. The design of the system must be accomplished through the collective bargaining process or in nonbargaining jurisdictions it should be incorporated into legislation, employer policy, and/or other sources that establish the terms and conditions of employment for education employees.
b. Any additional compensation beyond a single salary schedule must not be based on education employee evaluation, student performance, or attendance.
c. The criteria that are used to determine whether education employees receive the additional compensation should be clearly stated and subject to objective measurement. The system also should make clear how those criteria relate to the school district's educational objectives.
d. The system should not directly or indirectly limit the number of education employees who are eligible for the additional compensation. All education employees should be afforded a fair opportunity to meet the requisite standards and should receive the additional compensation if they do. The compensation system may recognize and reward the additional knowledge and skills that education employees have acquired or may acquire over their careers.
e. Full funding should be available to sustain the system. The allocation of funds to provide the additional compensation should not prevent increases in the basic compensation for all education employees.
f. The system should not diminish the professional status of those education employees who do not receive the additional compensation or in any way suggest that such education employees are not qualified for the positions that they hold. (2001, 2007)

F-11. Benefits

The National Education Association believes that benefit structures should be subject to collective bargaining or, in nonbargaining jurisdictions, incorporated into legislation, employer policy, and/or other sources that establish the terms and conditions of employment. The Association also believes that all education employees should be eligible for benefits that include but are not limited to—

a. Comprehensive insurance programs
    1. Health
    2. Dental
    3. Vision
    4. Hearing
    5. Life
    6. Legal
    7. Workers' compensation
    8. Long-term physical and mental disability
    9. Prescription drug
b. Paid leaves
    1. Sick leave with unlimited accumulation
    2. Personal leave with unlimited accumulation
    3. Bereavement leave
    4. Parental leave, including adoption
    5. Dependent care leave
    6. Sabbatical leave
    7. Professional leave
    8. Association leave
    9. Religious leave
c. Additional remuneration
    1. Severance pay
    2. Tuition reimbursement
    3. Retirement compensation
    4. Unemployment compensation
    5. Benefit extension for laid-off employees
d. Personal assistance
    1. Personal assault protection, and in the event of assault, counseling services and leave that is not subject to sick or personal leave
    2. Employee assistance program
    3. Reimbursement for damages to or loss of personal property at work site
    4. Child care and pre-school education
    5. An opportunity to participate in a cafeteria-type plan or plan authorized by Section 125 of the U.S. Federal Tax Code.

The Association further believes that education employees and their spouses, domestic partners, and/or dependents should have equal access to all benefits applicable to them.

The Association believes that comprehensive insurance programs should be provided for education employees on official leave of absence or parental leave.

The Association also believes that provisions should be made for retirees, their spouses, domestic partners, and/or dependents at their option to continue in the comprehensive health, dental, prescription drug, hearing, and vision programs.

The Association further believes that, if school districts consolidate or separate, education employees should not lose their tenure or have their salary, benefits, or seniority reduced. (1969, 2007)

F-12. Education Professionals Outside the Traditional K–12 Schools

The National Education Association recognizes the contributions of educators who work with students in school settings other than the traditional K–12 schools. The Association believes that these education professionals have the right to collective bargaining processes that are comparable to their K–12 counterparts. The Association also believes that these employees are entitled to equitable contract language that offers the same rights and protections as education employees within traditional K–12 school settings. (2007)

F-28. Education Employees Injured on the Job

The National Education Association believes that the legal rights of education employees injured on the job must be protected.

The Association encourages its state affiliates to assist members injured on the job so that those members have access to information regarding employment-related injuries and so that state affiliates may protect the rights of those members. (2000, 2007)

F-54. Substitute Teachers

The National Education Association believes in the importance of employing professional educators to fulfill the critical role of substitute teachers. The Association also believes that substitute teachers perform a vital function in the maintenance and continuity of daily education.

In order to achieve and maintain the highest standards of student learning and professional practice, and to ensure quality instruction in every classroom every day, the Association further believes that substitute teachers must—

a. Meet the same standards as other licensed teachers within the state
b. Receive professional compensation and benefits
c. Receive continuous professional development
d. Be provided with materials and information appropriate to the position in which they are substituting, including any special needs of the students.
e. Be entitled to representation and/or support by state and national affiliates in collective bargaining.

The Association condemns the practice of assigning substitute teachers to regular positions for an extended duration of time. Positions created by extended absence should be filled by available licensed teachers who are eligible to be placed on contractual status by the school district.

The Association opposes the practice of replacing absent teachers by dispersing students to other classrooms. The Association also opposes the use of individuals such as education support professionals, part-time employees, or employees hired through private agencies to cover classes. The Association further opposes requiring teachers to substitute during their preparation time, or in place of their regular teaching assignment.

The Association believes that school districts must provide full compensation for licensed teachers who substitute for personnel on extended leave. (1975, 2007)

F-58. Education in Correctional and Rehabilitation Agencies

The National Education Association believes that legislative and professional support should be given to members who teach in federal, state, and local correctional and rehabilitation institutions, hospitals, and other custodial agencies. The Association supports improving the standards of instruction in these institutions, which includes providing appropriately certified education professionals to carry out plans for students with individualized education programs (IEPs) or 504 plans.

The Association also believes that the rights of individuals who are protected under the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Americans with Disabilities Act must be preserved. (1973, 2007)

F-59. Retirement

The National Education Association believes that the retirement security of all pre-K through 12 members of retirement systems can be assured only by participation in a state or local retirement system with a guaranteed and adequate defined-benefit retirement plan. Such plans must be funded in a manner that assures the long-term stability of the plan. For pre-K through 12 members of retirement systems, defined-contribution provisions are appropriate only where they supplement adequate defined-benefit provisions.

The Association also believes that pension funding should include the following principles:

a. When actuarial liabilities exceed actuarial assets, the state and/or employer must make the necessary additional contributions to amortize the unfunded liability in no more than 30 years.
b. When actuarial assets exceed actuarial liabilities, the state and/or employer should not reduce the rate of contributions below the normal cost of the plan.
c. Employee contributions, if any, should be made on a pre-tax basis and be a percentage of total salary not to exceed the amount contributed by employers. The employer may pay part or all of the employee contribution.
d. Credit for all wages and salary must be included in all retirement benefit calculations.

The Association further believes retirement benefits should, at a minimum, include:

a. Full vesting in no more than 5 years
b. An initial benefit constituting a replacement income of 50 percent of the single highest year's salary from all sources after 20 years of creditable service and 75 percent after 30 years of creditable service; this benefit calculation equates to a basic benefit formula multiplier of 2.5 percent for all creditable years of service
c. Benefits based upon unisex mortality tables
d. Automatic pre-funded full cost-of-living pension increases for retirees and beneficiaries
e. Normal retirement eligibility with 25 creditable years of service or at age 55 if fully vested
f. No provisions in core plans to reduce benefits because of the existence of any annuity or retirement benefit source including Social Security; supplemental retirement plans designed to provide a leveling benefit must assure a level lifetime replacement income that significantly augments existing benefits of all members over time
g. Benefits that comply with nondiscriminatory Internal Revenue Service rules and regulations
h. Joint survivor benefits should be equally available for spouses and domestic partners; joint survivor benefits for any other person should be available based upon IRS guidelines
i. Disability or death benefits that should be equally available for spouses, dependents, and domestic partners
j. Provisions that define a full year of creditable service based upon working 80 percent or more of the contract year or 80 percent or more of the hours constituting a full year; partial year credit should be earned on a pro-rated basis for any service less than the minimum required to obtain a full year of creditable service
k. Provisions for the option of allowing unused sick leave and other end of service payments to be used for retirement credit
l. Provisions permitting the purchase of service credit earned while a member of another retirement system including any other public school district, Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools or while in the Peace Corps, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), or military service
m. Provisions permitting the purchase of service credit for sabbatical leaves, maternity/paternity/adoption leaves where credit is not automatically given, and any other approved leaves of absence; members affected by any forced leave provisions or separation of service provisions that are unlawful under current law should be permitted to purchase service credit for those periods of leave or separations at any time prior to retirement at the lowest plan rate
n. Provisions for, upon termination of employment, the portability to other qualified pension plans of the full actuarial value of retirement credits earned
o. Disability retirement for a service-connected disability available to education employees from the first day of employment; nonservice connected disability retirement shall be available for fully vested members; the benefit formula for disability retirement should yield benefits comparable to normal retirement benefits
p. Provisions for any tax-sheltered annuity and deferred compensation plans that have actuarial tables that do not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, or national origin
q. Provisions for health benefits for retirees, their spouses, domestic partners, and/or dependents that include a fully paid comprehensive health insurance plan regardless of Medicare eligibility; these benefits should be at least equal to those offered to full-time employees; those eligible for Medicare should be covered by a fully paid comprehensive Medicare supplement insurance benefit that along with Medicare equals the benefits provided to full-time employees.

The Association believes boards of trustees should:

a. Consist of active members who are all elected by and from their plan's active membership and retired members who are all elected by and from their plan's retired membership; the total number of active and retired member trustees should constitute a majority of the board
b. Administer the plan for the exclusive benefit of the beneficiaries of the system
c. Have the duty and authority to oversee the administration of both benefits and investments
d. Subject to their fiduciary responsibilities, have all the powers necessary to ensure their independence from the plan sponsor, including the power to obtain by employment or contract the services necessary to exercise the trustees' powers and perform the trustees' duties, including actuarial, auditing, custodial, investment, and legal services
e. Undertake periodic independent actuarial reviews and audits
f. Distribute an annual financial statement to all members
g. Use actuarial and investment policies with the highest level of fiscal integrity
h. Ensure that counseling, education, and services are available to all active and retired members
i. Recognize that, in their role as fiduciaries, they can identify and participate in appropriate educational programs and initiatives in order to acquire/maintain skills and expertise; these educational programs should be internally funded and managed exclusively by the board of trustees
j. Protect the systems' stability by opposing any actions that impair or jeopardize the guaranteed rights of plan participants' benefits.

The Association also believes:

a. Contributions made by employees to the pension plan should be federal tax deferred and not subject to FICA taxes
b. Contributions made by employers to the pension plan should not be subject to FICA taxes
c. Benefits paid should not be subject to any state's income tax
d. Benefits paid should not be offset due to eligibility in multiple retirement programs. (1969, 2007)

F-62. Medicare

The National Education Association believes that Medicare is a contract between the United States government and its citizens and that this commitment must not be breached.

The Association also believes that initiatives should be undertaken to ensure the long-term solvency of the Medicare system and to guarantee a level of health benefits that provides and ensures high quality, affordable, and comprehensive health care for all Medicare-eligible individuals. (1999, 2007)

G-3. Licensure

The National Education Association advocates rigorous state standards for entry into the teaching profession. As established by professional standards boards, these standards must include each of the following:

- high academic performance
- extensive clinical practice experience
- demonstrated knowledge of subject matter, pedagogy, and child development.

Every candidate, including those entering via alternative routes, should meet every standard prior to being granted a teaching license.

Assessments used to measure teacher skill, knowledge, and instructional competency must be valid and unbiased and should be included as one element of comprehensive assessment for completion of a teacher preparation program as well as for licensure into the profession.

The Association opposes licensure processes that lower or eliminate any of the standards outlined above, including "testing-only" approaches to teacher licensure.

The Association asserts that a teaching license should signify that an individual entering the teaching profession is competent to teach. A teaching license must be recognized as the primary requirement for employment in every primary, secondary, and adult education public and private school. The Association believes that all states should offer appropriate pre-K licensure. No license should be issued unless an individual possesses the entry-level knowledge and skills required for teaching. No emergency licenses should be issued. No assignments should be permitted outside the teacher's area of licensure without appropriate concurrent retraining supported by the local district.

The Association urges the elimination of state statutes/regulations that require teachers to renew their licenses. Where such renewal continues to be required, standardized literacy and basic skills tests to determine competency should not be used.

The Association supports regulations that would put professional educators, the majority of whom are licensed and practicing public school teachers, in state licensing agencies.

The Association also supports the periodic evaluation of licensure procedures to ensure that cultural, economic, gender, racial, and age biases are not perpetuated by the requirements for licensure. (1985, 2007)

I-8. Global Warming

The National Education Association believes that global warming causes significant measurable damage to the earth and its inhabitants.

The Association also believes that humans must take steps to change activities that contribute to global warming.

The Association supports environmentally sound practices that abate global warming and its effects. (2007)

I-11. Human Rights

The National Education Association believes that the governments of all nations must respect and protect the basic human and civil rights of every individual, including equal access to education as embodied in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Association condemns any action that limits or prohibits the free and responsible exercise of these rights and believes that all education employees must lead in the effort to prevent any encroachment on basic human and civil rights.

The Association also believes that the U.S. government should withhold all forms of military aid to governments that violate these rights.

The Association further believes that violence is abhorrent. The Association also condemns violence, as well as the tolerance of violence, and believes that all nations must pass and enforce measures to curtail and prevent actions and practices that inflict pain, suffering, mutilation, or death, and offer asylum to those threatened by such actions.

The Association expresses concern that the utilization of trade sanctions on food and medical supplies by any nation of the world to achieve political objectives fails to adequately consider the possible humanitarian impact of those policies on the civilian populations of the affected nations, particularly the young, the elderly, and the poor.

The Association deplores the holding of hostages, all forms of torture, and the taking of human life in the name of making a political statement. The Association believes that it is the responsibility of all governments to discourage such actions by individuals or groups of individuals. The Association supports an international judicial system that would hold accountable those who violate human rights.

The Association calls upon all nations to release all education employees and students who are being held without charge and to refrain from the use of coercion and arbitrary detention to punish the people of a specific area of their territories.

The Association further condemns the practice of capital punishment in nations without judicial safeguards such as the presumption of innocence and/or the right to counsel.

The Association also expresses concern that the practice of capital punishment in the United States impacts individuals disproportionately on the basis of social class, race, ethnicity, and gender. The Association supports ongoing efforts to review the practice of capital punishment for inequities based on these and other factors.

The Association opposes any federal, state, or local law; executive order or presidential signing statement; and/or amendment to the U.S. Constitution that curtails or infringes on basic human rights. (1977, 2007)

I-12. Civil Rights

The National Education Association is committed to the achievement of a totally integrated society. The Association calls upon Americans to eliminate—by statute and practice—barriers of race, color, national origin, religion, philosophical beliefs, political beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, gender identification, age, disability, size, marital status, and economic status that prevent some individuals, adult or juvenile, from exercising rights enjoyed by others, including liberties decreed in common law, the Constitution, and statutes of the United States. Civil order and obedience to the law must be ensured without abridgment of human and civil rights. All individuals must be assured a speedy and fair judicial process with free legal counsel for those in need. To be effective citizens, individuals must be trained and aided in developing strategies and expertise that will enable them to operate effectively in a democratic society.

The Association opposes any federal, state, or local law; executive order or presidential signing statement; and/or amendment to the U.S. or state constitutions that curtail basic civil rights. (1969, 2007)

I-13. Human and Civil Rights of Children and Youth

The National Education Association believes that the human and civil rights of children and youth must be protected and opposes the exploitation of children and youth under any circumstances. The Association also believes that all children possess a fundamental civil right of access to a system of high quality public education grounded in the principles of adequacy and equity.

The Association condemns the use of children and youth by organizations, governments, and political/military movements to advance their political objectives. The Association also condemns governments that subject young people to physical or mental abuse, violence, and unwarranted detention or incarceration. The Association supports the rights of youth to safely access education and other human services during conditions of war, occupation, and civil strife. The Association opposes the impressment or acceptance of minors into the service of the armed forces of any government or into the service of revolutionary forces under any circumstances. The Association also supports programs and other efforts to prevent and alleviate the effects of such trauma upon children and youth.

The Association further believes that children and youth in detention centers must be provided educational programs that include any special education services per a student's individualized education program (IEP) or a student's 504 plan to enable a student to become a contributing member of society. Teachers in such centers must be prepared to provide instruction in life skills and learning skills.

The Association also opposes the imposition of the death penalty or life imprisonment without parole on individuals whose offenses were committed prior to age 18. The Association further condemns the practice of placing children and youth in trouble in abusive environments. The Association further opposes the placement of children and youth who are not charged with any offense in facilities with persons who are charged with criminal offenses. The Association believes that there must be separate facilities for the detention and for the incarceration of children and youth and supports the development of alternatives to supplement the use of such facilities. (1988, 2007)

I-14. Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples

The National Education Association recognizes that American Indians and Alaska Natives are sovereign nations with the rights of self-determination and supports Native Hawaiians in reclaiming their rights of self-determination and sovereignty.

The Association also recognizes that sovereignty includes the right to provide for culturally appropriate education of American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. (2007)

I-20. Immigration

The National Education Association supports efforts to improve the immigration process, including the provision of due process, political asylum, and timely legalization without regard to national origin. The Association also supports policies that protect the integrity of the family unit. The Association believes that English and citizenship classes should be available in sufficient numbers to ensure that immigrating individuals can comply with all federal mandates for permanent residence and/or citizenship.

The Association opposes any immigration policy that denies human and/or civil rights or educational opportunities to immigrants and their children regardless of their immigration status, hinders workers' abilities to organize, imposes excessive fees and fines on those seeking legalization, or criminalizes individuals or groups who support or assist immigrants regardless of their status. The Association also opposes any policy that makes legalization or naturalization dependent upon military service and/or service in a combat zone. The Association condemns such policies as inhumane and discriminatory. (1984, 2007)

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The Peace Corps is looking for experienced educators to teach in classrooms and communities around the world, fostering learning environments that encourage cross-cultural exchange.

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resources

60 **Grants & Awards** Participate in NASA's STS-118 Space Shuttle mission by taking the Engineering Design Challenge.

62 **In Print** A Parisian tale of gastronome mice, complete with French vocabulary—*très charmant*!

62 **Books by NEA Members** Journalism teachers: check out a manual for creating quality student publications.

63 **Take Note** Indoor Air Quality lesson plans are now available from the NEA Health Information Network.

65 **Library Disaster Preparedness Toolkit** Preparing your library, just in case.

65 **Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits** It's Life Insurance Awareness Month—are you adequately covered?

66 **Diversity Calendar** September 15 begins Hispanic Heritage Month.

Deadlines Approaching for The NEA Foundation's October and November Grant Reviews

APPLICATIONS ARE DUE BY OCTOBER 15, 2007, FOR BOTH THE *STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRANTS* AND THE *LEARNING & LEADERSHIP GRANTS*

THE NEA FOUNDATION
www.neafoundation.org

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRANTS provide $5,000 to improve the academic achievement of students by engaging them in critical thinking and problem-solving that deepens their knowledge of standards-based subject matter.

LEARNING & LEADERSHIP GRANTS provide opportunities for teachers, education support professionals, and higher education faculty and staff to engage in high-quality professional development and lead their colleagues in professional growth. The grant amount is $2,000 for individuals and $5,000 for groups engaged in collegial study.

Recipients will be notified by March 15, 2008. Grants fund activities for 12 months from the award date. Visit **www.neafoundation.org** for information, including guidelines and applications, or call **(202) 822-7840**.

APPLICATIONS ARE DUE BY NOVEMBER 12, 2007, FOR THE *NEA'S BOOKS ACROSS AMERICA LIBRARY BOOKS AWARDS*

In collaboration with NEA, the NEA Foundation will make approximately 50 awards of $1,000 each to public schools serving economically disadvantaged students to purchase books for school libraries. The 2008 NEA's Books Across America Library Books Awards are made possible with support from individuals who donated to NEA's Books Across America fund. Only award recipients will be notified in writing. A list of recipients will be posted on the NEA Foundation's Web site (www.neafoundation.org) by March 3, 2008.

For more information, visit **www.neafoundation.org/grants.htm** or call **(202) 822-7840**.

SPEAK UP

During two one-week periods in the fall and spring, The People Speak (TPS) will encourage students at U.S. and international high schools to hold debates on two of the most critical global issues of our day: climate and water.

Participating schools can compete to send their winning four-person debate team to the United Nations Foundation Global Student Leadership Summit in New York City. Held in July 2008, the summit is an opportunity to meet other students, learn more about the issues, and take advantage of opportunities, including a special U.N. tour.

To participate, student teams must:

REGISTER ONLINE at **http://globaldebates.thepeoplespeak.org**.

RESEARCH THE TOPIC(S) and prepare clear, persuasive arguments for both sides of the issue(s).

ORGANIZE AN EVENT to draw the largest number of students and present their debate.

HAVE STUDENTS IN ATTENDANCE VOTE for the team they felt was most compelling and persuasive. TPS will tally the votes and post results on their Web site. Fall debates must take place during the week of October 12–22. Information is forthcoming

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

regarding the spring schedule. For details, including tips on how to stage a debate and attract as large an audience as possible, visit **www.thepeoplespeak.org**.

NEA'S URBAN GRANTS PROGRAM

Each year, NEA awards 25 Urban Grants in the amount of $5,000 each to local affiliates to help in the development of education reform leadership programs for preK–12/graduate school faculty and education support professionals. NEA Constituent Relations administers the grants and looks for proposals that contribute to restoring public confidence in public education by reflecting some aspect of NEA's Strategic Priorities.

NEA local affiliates of 500 members or more who are listed with the NEA membership office, or the largest local NEA affiliate of any state regardless of membership number, are eligible to apply.

Applicants must submit a proposal postmarked no later than **September 30, 2007**, to NEA Constituent Relations/NCUEA Office, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. The Constituent Relations staff will correspond with applicants, as well as their respective state Association and regional offices, notifying them of receipt of the proposal.

For information on applying, selection criteria, and the review process, visit **www.nea.org/teachers/urbangrants.html**.

SEEDS IN SPACE

Join NASA's Engineering Design Challenge to design, analyze, build, and assess plant growth chambers as part of a standards-based, grade-banded activity for elementary, middle, and high school students that is related to the STS-118 Space Shuttle mission.

Growth chambers—much like the space plant chambers students will design and build—are part of the education payload on STS-118. The first Educator Astronaut, Barbara Morgan, and crewmates will take up two growth chambers along with 10 million basil seeds. These seeds will be exposed to microgravity and brought back to Earth.

After your students build their own growth chambers, you will receive actual space seeds that you can use along with other Earth seeds to test your design.

Space seeds are available on a limited basis to educators who register and complete the challenge with their classes. Go to **www.nasa.gov/audience/foreducators/stseducation/home/index.html** for information and to register.

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Teaching Research Spotlight

If you're interested in what the research says about your profession, visit NEA's online venue highlighting professional research on best practices in educational issues.

September's focus is on: "Alternative Routes to Teacher Certification"

Learn more at www.nea.org/ref?septresearch

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mixitup at Lunch Day nov. 13, 2007

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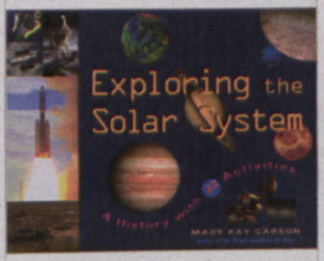
In Print

MUSIC FOR THE MASSES

In 1958, Leonard Bernstein broadcast the first of 53 *Young People's Concerts* with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. In *Leonard Bernstein: Young People's Concerts*, editor Jack Gottlieb presents a selection from the maestro's Emmy- and Peabody-winning lectures that exemplify his genius for making music accessible to young and old alike. 400 pp. $22.95 from Amadeus Press. Order at www.amadeuspress.com.

TO INFINITY AND BEYOND!

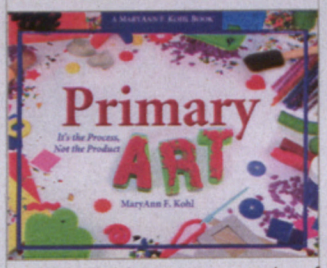


For millennia, humans have looked to the heavens to make sense of the universe. In *Exploring the Solar System: A History with 22 Activities*, Mary Kay Carson traces our journey from ancient times to the age of satellites and space shuttles. The highly readable narrative includes activities such as designing a reentry vehicle, as well as color photographs and illustrations. Ages 9 and older. 168 pp. $17.95 from Chicago Review Press. Available at ipgbook.com.

THE CHEESE STANDS ALONE

The Mice of Bistro des Sept Frères by Marie LeTourneau tells the tale of Chef Marcel, culinary genius and restaurateur, and his seven sons, who make the best cheese soup in Paris—thanks to a secret ingredient. Disaster looms when a food critic arrives for a surprise tasting and Marcel discovers that his secret supply has run out. *Les sept frères* start the soup, but it is their little *soeur*, Petite Michelle, with her unerring culinary instinct, who saves *la soupe* and the day. 30 pp. Ages 4–8. $15.95 from Tanglewood Press. Visit www.tanglewoodbooks.com.

LICENSE TO CREATE



According to children's art expert MaryAnn Kohl, author of *Primary Art: It's the Process, Not the Product*, freedom to create and satisfying results are prime motivators for children ages 5 to 8. Her activities call for easily obtainable materials and simple techniques to help children create works of art that they can display with pride: Easy Squeezy Batik, Jellie Dangles, and more. 191 pages. $19.95 from Gryphon House, Inc. Available at www.gryphonhouse.com.

BOOKS BY NEA MEMBERS

MORNING MEETING MESSAGES K–6: 180 SAMPLE CHARTS FROM THREE CLASSROOMS

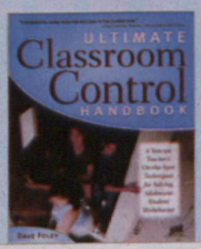
By Rosalea Fisher, Eric Henry, and Deborah Porter

Welcoming students, setting a positive tone, and reinforcing academic skills are just some of the ways that you can use morning messages to send students into the day ready to learn. In addition to its many samples, this book offers guidelines and tips for creating your own inspiring messages. 240 pp. $24 from Northeast Foundation for Children, Inc. Go to www.responsiveclassroom.org to order.

ULTIMATE CLASSROOM CONTROL HANDBOOK: A VETERAN TEACHER'S ON-THE-SPOT TECHNIQUES FOR SOLVING ADOLESCENT STUDENT MISBEHAVIOR

By Dave Foley

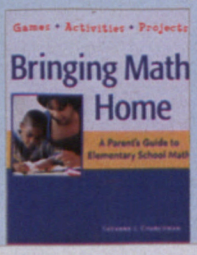
Written by a 29-year middle and junior high school classroom teacher, this volume focuses on how teachers can help students behave through immediate response, consistency, and understanding the motivations of typical adolescents. Foley encourages teachers to avoid getting bogged down in rules and concentrate instead on eliminating behaviors that interrupt the process of teaching and learning. 265 pp. $15.95 from JIST Works. Go to www.jist.com.



BRINGING MATH HOME: A PARENT'S GUIDE TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MATH

By Suzanne Churchman

In this homework guide, parents stymied by pleas of "Help me with my math!" will find information and reassurance to move beyond basic arithmetic to more complex concepts taught in today's math curriculum. Using the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics *Standards* as a foundation, the author offers projects, games, and activities that children and adults will enjoy together. Grades K–5. 240 pp. $19.95 from Zephyr Press. Visit www.zephyrpress.com.



THE MANUAL FOR SCHOLASTIC NEWSPAPER PUBLICATIONS (STUDENT EDITION)

By Peter Daddone

Written by the advisor and student staff of a successful high school newspaper, this textbook emphasizes hands-on techniques for producing a quality student publication while exploring the basics of news gathering and reporting. Grades 6–12. 219 pp. $32.95 from The Writing Company. To order, visit www.writingco.com. (An Advisor's Guide is also available for $22.95.)

Take Note

FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR INDOOR AIR QUALITY TRAINING

Through a 2007 Representative Assembly New Business Item and a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the NEA Health Information Network (NEA HIN) will provide funding to send up to 18 teams of NEA members and UniServ staff to the eighth annual EPA Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Tools for Schools National Symposium and fifth annual NEA HIN Pre-Symposium training. This year the trainings will be held December 5–8 in Washington, D.C.

Each year teachers, education support professionals, UniServ staff, school board officials, administrators, and others attend the conference to discuss improving IAQ in our nation's schools. The conference centers on EPA's IAQ Tools for Schools program—a nationwide initiative that helps school employees assess, resolve, and prevent IAQ problems and reduce exposure to asthma triggers in schools. Innovative workshops will be offered on conducting school walkthroughs, mold remediation, green cleaning, asthma friendly schools, radon, and more. Building on last year's success, NEA HIN will once again conduct a Pre-Symposium IAQ training to address IAQ issues from the union perspective. For more information, and to find out how you can apply, visit **www.neahin.org**.

INDOOR AIR QUALITY LESSON PLANS AVAILABLE

The indoor or "built" environment is as fascinating and complex as the outdoor environment, and because we spend 90 percent of our day indoors, it's also crucial to health and productivity.

Discover how you can promote awareness of indoor air quality (IAQ) and teach curriculum standards at the same time by checking out our hands-on, interactive lesson plans. This series of K–12 lesson plans supplements the U.S. EPA's IAQ Tools for Schools program and can be easily integrated with your district's curriculum. Many of the lessons can be adapted to any grade level and used as independent activities or put together to build an IAQ unit.

To download the lesson plans or to learn more about EPA's IAQ Tools for Schools program, visit **www.neahin.org**.

GYNECOLOGIC CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Did you know that four out of every five women in the United States become infected with Human Papillomavirus (HPV)—the virus that causes cervical cancer—at some point in their lives? In recognition of Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month, HIN is revving up its commitment to raising awareness about the prevention of cervical cancer, which disproportionately affects women of color and low-income women.

At NEA's 2007 Representative Assembly, a New Business Item was passed that will broaden HIN's efforts to educate NEA members and the community at large about prevention, screening, and treatment options, including the new HPV vaccine. HIN staff will also assist states that are implementing programs on HPV awareness and cervical cancer prevention through state legislation.

For more information visit **www.neahin.org** or contact Sara Jacobson at **sjacobson@nea.org**.

THE CURE FOR SUMMER MATH AMNESIA

Back to School with CYBERCHASE is a PBS TV and Web promotion featuring three weeks of key math shows designed to help kids get their math skills in gear for the new school year. The Emmy award-winning *Back to School* includes core math topics—fractions, decimals, division, measurement, geometry, and financial literacy.

The online version began August 27 and continues through September 28 at **http://pbskids.org/cyberchase**, with activities and tips for kids, parents, and teachers. (Note that a simple, free registration process is required.) On air, the series kicks off with "A Fraction of a Chance" on Monday, September 3. In this episode, the cyber-bird Digit must team up with the conniving Wicked to save his friends who are stuck in a cyber-vortex. Can the unlikely duo solve the fraction-based clues in time? Visit **www.thirteen.org/cyberchasenews** to find out more.

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59 is the average retirement age for NEA members.

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ANNOUNCEMENT TO ALL ASSOCIATION MEMBERS—POTENTIAL VACANCY

In accordance with the *Campaign and Election Regulations for NEA Offices*, the NEA Committee on Constitution, Bylaws and Standing Rules is announcing a potential vacancy in one of the NEA executive offices. If the current NEA Secretary-Treasurer is elected Vice President, a one-year vacancy to complete her unexpired term as Secretary-Treasurer would occur. This one-year term as Secretary-Treasurer would be filled by an election at the 2008 Representative Assembly.

Members wishing to run for this position must do so on a contingency basis—i.e., contingent on the position becoming vacant—since it is not yet known whether the vacancy will occur. For details, contact Stephen Behrer of NEA Governance and Policy Support at **(202) 822-7923** or **sbehrer@nea.org**.

FREE TO BE YOU AND ME

Human rights group Children As They Are and parent organization Gender Public Advocacy Coalition (GenderPAC) are striving to make gender discrimination and stereotyping in schools a thing of the past. The group—which is conducting a grassroots campaign to include gender discrimination in schools' zero tolerance polices—reported last year that more than 40 school districts encompassing more than 2.5 million students have adopted policies ensuring a safer learning environment for all students, regardless of their gender expression.

When asked why the organization works so hard to reduce gender discrimination in the school system, parenting director Taneika Taylor replied, "At some point in all of our lives, kids face pressures to conform to gender expectations. Too often they find themselves curtailing interests to avoid being ostracized or teased for not being the 'right' kind of girl or boy. We're trying to make it OK for everyone to express themselves authentically."

GenderPAC provides resources for educators, parents, and students. For more information, go to **www.childrenastheyare.org**.

IS YOUR SCHOOL LIBRARY PREPARED FOR DISASTER?

With support from Dollar General and in collaboration with the American Library Association, American Association of School Librarians, and the NEA Foundation, NEA has produced a library disaster toolkit designed to jump-start schools and librarians to plan for the unthinkable—disaster relief following catastrophic weather or other destructive events. The toolkit includes a sampling of disaster planning resources organized around five readiness steps:

ASSESS preparedness
IDENTIFY district resources
MAKE a plan
CREATE emergency procedures
PREPARE an emergency kit

Part of the Beyond Words initiative, which includes grants to replace books, media, and library equipment for public school libraries that have incurred substantial damage or hardship from natural disasters or acts of terrorism, the toolkit can be downloaded at the NEA Foundation Web site.

Go to **www.neafoundation.org** for more information.

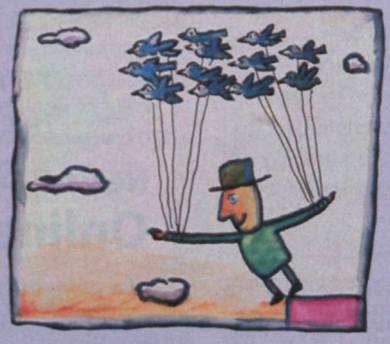
Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

THE NEA MEMBERS INSURANCE TRUST SUPPORTS NATIONAL LIFE INSURANCE AWARENESS MONTH

MORE THAN HALF of NEA members are underinsured, and those with coverage don't have enough to adequately protect their families from devastating circumstances.

Life Insurance Awareness Month was created to inform the public about why life insurance should be an integral part of every family's financial plan. Industry professionals recommend having seven to nine times your annual household income in coverage. And remember, women need as much coverage as men because most families depend on two incomes.

Act now to reevaluate your coverage today. Get the facts on all the life insurance plans created exclusively for NEA members by visiting www.neamb.com/thinklife or by calling (800) 637-4636 Monday–Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., ET.



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Learn how to build your assets for a secure retirement through the free *Investing in Your Future* online financial planning and investing seminars. Then, up until September 30, 2007, submit your "on paper" portfolio to play the No Stakes Investment Game, and follow your portfolio's progress over the days, weeks, and months of the next year. Prizes will be awarded for the top performing accounts! Register online at www.neamb.com/investinginyou.

NO MEMBER DUES DOLLARS ARE USED TO SUPPORT NEA MEMBER BENEFITS PROGRAMS.

ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES

Diversity Calendar

SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER 2—BIRTHDAY OF CHRISTA MCAULIFFE
Teacher and NEA member McAuliffe (1948–1986) was America's first "ordinary citizen" in space. Along with six other crew members, she perished in 1986 on board the Space Shuttle *Challenger.*

SEPTEMBER 3—LABOR DAY
Begun in New York by labor-leader Peter McGuire, Congress made the observance a federal holiday in 1894.

SEPTEMBER 8—INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY
This event focuses on reading from a global perspective. Visit www.reading.org/association/meetings/literacy_day.html.

SEPTEMBER 12—ROSH HASHANAH
The Jewish New Year begins at sunset on this day, ends at sunset on September 14, and is marked by solemn religious observances.

SEPTEMBER 13—RAMADAN BEGINS
Muslims worldwide fast and honor the revelation of the *Qur'an* to Muhammad during this Islamic holy month, which ends October 12.

SEPTEMBER 15–OCTOBER 15—HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH
In 1988, this weeklong event grew to a monthlong celebration of Hispanic culture and tradition. Visit www.tolerance.org/teach/activities/activity.jsp?ar=709 for activities and resources, with an emphasis on civil rights.

SEPTEMBER 15–16—MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE DAYS
These days celebrate the start in 1810 of Mexico's struggle for independence from Spain.

SEPTEMBER 21—YOM KIPPUR
The Day of Attonement begins at sundown, concluding at sundown the next day. Devout Jews attend synagogue and spend time in fasting, reflection, and prayer.

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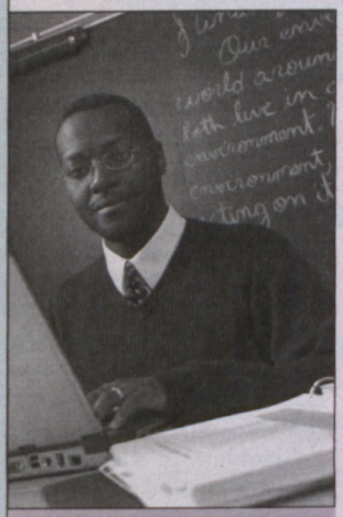

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- FAX: (202) 822-7377
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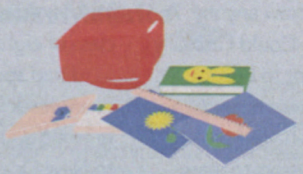

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CONFESSIONS OF A CAREER-CHANGER

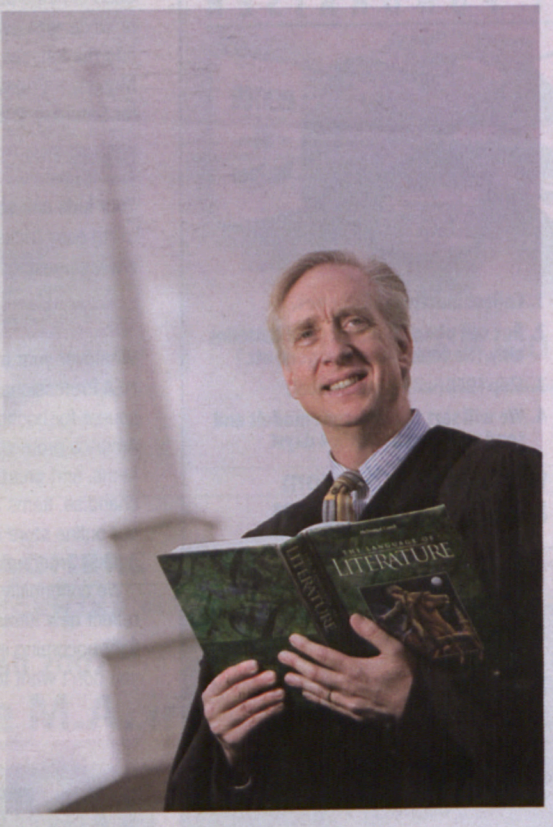
Goodbye preaching, hello teaching. BY DAVID DENNY

BACK TO SCHOOL DAY was always big in my churches. As minister, I would stand in the pulpit and salute the brave educators celebrating (dreading) the beginning of a new year. Holding my hands high in Mosaic fashion, I would call for all the hallowed teachers to stand, and I would sanctify them for another year of service to mankind.

Little did I know I would one day be one of the sacrificial lambs led to the—well, I won't say slaughter, that sounds so permanent. So True Confession #1 is this: I never thought I would be a teacher. Never!

After nearly 25 years of standing in front of octogenarians in fashionable Sunday hats smiling up at me with southern gentility, I leapt from the sacred to the secular. One day I was parsing Greek verbs in Matthew 11:25 preparing for a sermon, and the next day I was sitting with a roomful of somewhat confused career-switchers in mid-leap.

Let me be clear: I did not leave the ministry easily. But church politics can be wearying, and after decades of fish bowl living, I decided to risk a new challenge.



> "I was locked inside a small room with 30 eighth-graders."

'If you survive...'

I will never forget that first day at Old Dominion University, holding a thick packet of information under one arm, finding a seat in the lecture hall. I did not know anyone. A thousand doubts tore at me. Could I actually be a teacher? Did I really want to be?

Nestled among pilots, lawyers, and nurses, I heard the old white-haired professor say: "It will take you five years to learn this craft. Some will make it. Some won't." I twitched. He continued. "If you survive, you will find teaching to be a fulfilling career."

The teacher as ape

During my month-long career-switcher intensive course, I taught three lessons, each one to my fellow professionals pretending to be middle school students. No one asked to use the bathroom seven times. They politely raised their hands for questions.

Then it was over and I was a job seeker. I remember talking to a school administrator in Virginia Beach. Desperate to fill an English position, he hired me on the spot. The next day, I was standing in front of a class of eighth-graders. I was petrified.

I had spoken before hundreds of people every week for over 20 years, soothed grieving souls at hospital beds from Chicago to New Orleans, led tour groups through Europe. But that was all irrelevant, because now, I was locked inside a small room with 30 eighth-graders who stared at me as if I was a visiting ape from China in a D.C. zoo.

That first month nearly swamped me. Each night I pored over the thick curriculum guide, which was like a huge cookbook without an index or pretty pictures of steaming soups and chocolate cakes. The more I read, the more the recipes merged and morphed into Delphic formulas with keyless locks. I couldn't figure it out! Panic swelled in my chest. The second night, I broke into a cold sweat, pacing back and forth at 3 a.m. Confession #2: I nearly quit.

Stirred imaginations

Since then, I have learned there are very few Mt. Everest moments in teaching. Educators thrive at the lower elevations where student smiles and thank yous abound. Little advances can be so gratifying. I have watched clumsy writers become adept at stringing nouns and verbs into miniature works of art, often amazing themselves. I have seen dull imaginations stirred in playful discussions of novels. I have ridden yellow buses with energetic students on field trips of discovery. Each little success is a step on the route to Everest.

Five hundred lives

Five years have passed since I first stood in that little room with two windows, a sink, and 30 kids waiting for me to say hello. I can honestly say now, I am a teacher. Maybe not the best or most talented, but I have touched about 500 lives. That's a congregation! This week, one of the girls in my first class came back to visit. She told me I was her favorite teacher and that she wanted to be a writer like me. I didn't let her see my tears. Final Confession: I love teaching.

David Denny teaches English at Lynnhaven Middle School in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

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